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Contributors



Have you seen the stage production of *War Horse*? **Georgia Guerin** spoke to one of the puppeteers to find out how they make the puppets so lifelike – find out more on p14.



Horses are herd animals, so how does it effect them when we turn them out alone? **Lucy Turner** investigates the pros and cons of individual turnout on p92.



Retiring your horse can be a tough decision. **Charlotte Anderson** explores the options to help you make the right decision for him – read more on p108.

Welcome

Lameness – I hope you're lucky enough not to have experienced it, but unfortunately our precious horses seem prone to injuring themselves more than we'd like. His welfare is paramount to you, though, so it's important that you can spot lameness so it can be diagnosed and treated as quickly as possible.

This month, vet Tim Adams explains how to spot lameness and identify which leg is affected – turn to p84 to read more.

My first horse, Nora, was – to put it mildly – tricky. One of her many quirks was being headshy. During our first winter together, as often as not I would have to dismantle her bridle to be able to put it on her. Pushing anything over her ears was out of the question for quite a while. It was as upsetting as it was frustrating and I wish I'd had Emma Massingale's excellent tips (p52) to help me. It would have made life much better for both of us. Whether your horse is headshy or you simply want to establish good habits, Emma's advice is unmissable.

Choosing the right tack is about more than ensuring your horse's comfort (although, of course, that's paramount) – it's also essential that, if you compete, your kit is competition-legal. This month, *Horse&Rider* comes to the rescue with a complete guide to competition-approved bits for every major discipline on p124. You're welcome! Until next month...

Louise



Louise Kittle, Editor
Horse&Rider

Louise started riding aged six. She's a qualified BHS IntSM and owns Ted, a five-year-old Irish gelding. Ted is just beginning his ridden career, and Louise hopes he'll make a great all-rounder when he finishes growing!



This month with the *H&R* team...

The shoot for our hacking series with Lucinda Fredericks (p30) took place on Salisbury Plain. The morning dawned overcast and rainy – disaster! But Lucinda's ever-cheerful personality perked us up and by the time we arrived on the top of the plain, the weather began to clear.

Her tips for training your horse out hacking, staying safe and boosting fitness, and ramping up

the fun-factor on a hack are all things I've put into practise at home in the Surrey Hills when riding out on my horse, Flynn. Why don't you try her inspiring ideas this weekend?

Victoria Rea, Marketing Assistant

Horse&Rider

Discover our team's wealth of horsey experience at horseandrideruk.com

EDITORIAL

Editor Louise Kittle
Assistant Editor Lucy Turner
Staff Writer Charlotte Anderson
Editorial Assistant Georgia Guerin

ART

Art Editor Sarah Garland
Designer Adam Witt

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Group Advertising Manager Abi Cannon
Account Manager Sammy Backstrom
Sales Executive Victoria Howe
Advertising Production Freda Jackson
Marketing Manager Zoe Cannon

Marketing Co-ordinator

Senior Marketing Assistant
Gemma O'Neil
Marketing Assistant Victoria Rea,
Sophie Rigby

PUBLISHING

Accounts Peggy Ainsworth,
Sarah Smith
Office Manager Vicki Owen
Commercial Director
Marion O'Sullivan MBE
Publishing Director Terry Grimwood
Deputy Managing Director
Andrea Moffatt, Steve Moore
Managing Director Kate Austin

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■ Supporter of equine charities, including World Horse Welfare, The Brooke Hospital for Animals and The Donkey Sanctuary
■ Associate member of the British Equestrian Trade Association and Professional Publishers Association

Product prices correct at the time of going to press. *Horse&Rider* cannot guarantee that items will be in stock or that prices will not change. If you have enquiries regarding products or sizing, please contact the relevant company.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Phone 01795 412893
Email horseandrider@servicehelpline.co.uk
Online horseandrideruk.com
Post *Horse&Rider* Subscriptions, FREEPOST RSHK-TULJ-ABJR, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8GU
Annual subscriptions UK £51.87, Europe £77.48, Rest of World £86.47
Back issues Single copy UK £5.73, Europe £6.99, Rest of World £7.62

PRINTING

William Gibbons

DISTRIBUTION

Marketforce

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Horseworld



Centre stage

War Horse is at the New London Theatre in the West End until February 2016. The story follows Joey, a Thoroughbred x Irish Draught, on his extraordinary and emotional journey from the fields of rural Devon to the trenches of First World War

France. Puppeteer Sam Wilmott explained to *Horse&Rider* how they are endlessly observing horses to perfect their portrayal of equine behaviour, bringing the puppets to life in such a way that you forget there aren't two real horses on stage. Read more about what it's like to be a War Horse puppeteer on p14. Find out more at warhorseonstage.com ▶

Photo: Brinkhoff Mögenburg





Pony progress

Emma Massingale has had a successful time on the island with six members of her Connemara liberty team. Emma took four of her existing team and two new, unhandled ponies she purchased at the Connemara sales to an uninhabited island off the Connemara coast, and lived there for a month. As well as contending with island life, catching and cooking her own food, Emma has been training the two new members of her team. Using no headcollar, bridle or saddle, Emma has backed Evenos and Echo while on the island, where the horses are free with no boundaries but the sea. Emma has also taught her two new ponies to lie down and she attributes much of her success with the project to her liberty team she took with her – Nahla, Atlantis, Comet and Calypso.

Story of a champion

Valegro's official biography launches at the National Dressage Championships (17–20 September). *Valegro: Champion Horse* is written by his owner/trainer, Carl Hester and tells Valegro's rags to riches story, which came from Carl's vision to bring together the potential of a young rider, Charlotte Dujardin, with a horse of outstanding ability. Now a horsey household name, Valegro has taken the sporting world by storm. He is currently Olympic, World and European Champion, and world number one, and has left a trail of broken world records in his wake. The book includes a foreword from Zara Phillips and 250 illustrations. You can pre-order your copy at horseandrideruk.com/shop



Saddle switch debut

Former Olympic cyclist, Victoria Pendleton, finished eighth in her first race as an amateur jockey. Rivals in the George Frewer Charity Race at Newbury racecourse included eventing legend Mark Todd, who finished fifth, and ex-point-to-point champion Mike Felton. The race marked four months since Victoria started training for her goal to ride in the Foxhunters Chase at the 2016 Cheltenham Festival. The next step is to undertake a Category A Amateur licence course at the British Racing School, a necessity if she is to enter the Foxhunters Chase.

Power of poo

Finland's government has announced that it wants the country to turn away from fossil fuels and move towards using a new power source – horse manure – to heat homes instead. Its new manifesto sets out plans for the large-scale use of manure as a renewable source of energy. One energy company is already trying out a biofuel made by mixing horse manure with a wood-based litter, which can then be burned to create power.

It's predicted that the annual waste created by three horses would be enough to heat a family home for a year. There are around 77,000 horses in Finland, which gives the potential for more than 20,000 homes to become completely manure-heated. It would also go some way to solve the problem associated with disposing of the animals' waste, because its use as a fertiliser is prohibited on fields that drain into waterways and from 2016, Finland is implementing a ban on taking organic waste to landfill sites.

Back to black

Black horses have returned to the Lloyds Bank advertising campaign to celebrate its 250th anniversary. The campaign is titled 'Horse story' and shows how horses have been used in everyday life, with horses putting people first, since 1765.

It includes a team of horses pulling a fire engine and the last horse-drawn RNLI lifeboat, and finishes with British para showjumper Susi Rogers Hartley cantering through a forest.

Horse Health Week

Keeping Britain's Horses Healthy (KBHH) is launching Horse Health Week (21–28 September). During Horse Health Week, KBHH will be looking at all aspects of responsible horse ownership to raise awareness of horse health, including preventative healthcare and responsible horse ownership.

For more information and to download an information pack, visit healthyhorses.co.uk

Raising awareness

Leanne McDonald has completed a charity trek challenge for herself and her four-legged team. Along with her horses, Candyfloss and Tinkerbelle, and dog, Foxy, Leanne undertook a 300-mile journey on foot across Scotland. The trek raised money for the Equine Grass Sickness Fund, and Leanne's aim is to increase awareness and raise money for future research into the condition. Candyfloss fell ill with grass sickness in summer of 2013, but has recovered well and was given a clean bill of health to take part in the trek.

It wasn't all plain sailing, though. On the 10th day, Leanne got lost and had to walk her animals to a height of 2,500ft to get mobile phone reception so that she could raise the alarm. A mountain rescue team was sent to their aid and the team were able to continue, reaching their final destination, the Royal Dick



School of Veterinary Studies at Edinburgh University, a month later.

"Some days we were walking for 10 hours," explained Leanne. "However, it was an incredible experience and by talking to people along the route, I was able to tell them about grass sickness and help raise awareness. I also have to say a big thank you to everyone who supported us, especially the mountain rescue team."

To donate, go to justgiving.com/thefabulousfivesgrasssicknessawarenessrides

Cause for celebration

The founder of a horsey London institution is celebrating half a century of riding in the city. Australian stockman Ross Nye arrived in London in 1965. Riding in Hyde Park, he realised that opportunities for the public to ride in the city were rapidly decreasing and set about turning around the decline. He has worked tirelessly ever since to extend riding tracks around the park and boost communication between the varied horsey groups who use the facilities, including the Household Cavalry, Mounted Police, Royal Mews Coachmen and civilians.

Say "Hi" to the H&R team at:

- World of the Horse
Burghley Horse Trials
3–6 September
- World of the Horse
Blair Castle European Eventing Championships
10–13 September

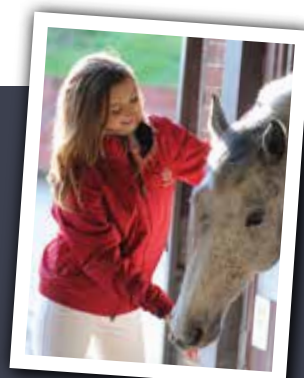
Train online

Have you enjoyed *Horse&Rider's* features with trainer Jason Webb? He has launched an online training platform to help you improve your relationship with your horse. Packed with video tutorials, it's suitable for riders of any level – all you need is an internet connection! Find out more at yourhorsemanship.com

★★★ Rate H&R and win!

Rate H&R and you could win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket, worth £89.95!

Visit tinyurl.com/RateSept15 to give our features a star rating and one lucky reader will take home this versatile, lightweight and waterproof fleece-lined jacket, ideal for all-year-round wear. Combining practical features with style, it's designed for in the saddle and on the yard. Colour may vary. mountainhorse.co.uk



Chasing championships

The European Eventing Championships isn't the only big event this September. Throughout the month, there are championships in nearly every major discipline, along with other big events that are not to be missed...



NAF BRC Championships 5-6 September

➡ Lincolnshire Showground, Grange-de-Lings, Lincolnshire

The British Riding Club Championships hosts Riding Club teams from across the country, competing in dressage, riding tests, showjumping, style jumping and showing. There are 34,000 Riding Club members and 500 clubs. The championship riders have qualified through 23 area qualifiers. Senior teams and individuals will compete on Saturday 5, and juniors on Sunday 6. Why not go along to support your local team and indulge in a spot of retail therapy in the tradestands?

Admission: Free

Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials 17-20 September

➡ Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

This year, Blenheim celebrates its 25th anniversary and, with two classes running over four days in the grounds of the beautiful palace, it's sure to be a fabulous weekend. As well as the CCI3* there will be a CIC3* class for eight and nine-year-olds. There are also Pony Club and Riding Club team competitions, a BE100 Eventers Challenge, Eventers vs Jockeys High Jump Challenge and a variety of displays, including side saddle, flyball and classic cars.

Admission: Advance general admission tickets from £11 for adults. Accompanied children 12 and under go free

British Dressage Summer National Championships 17-20 September

➡ Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire

Catch the top riders in action, plus some of the nation's best up-and-coming horses in the main arena or watch them behind the scenes as they prepare in the warm-up. There will also be a number of displays, including the Eilberg family, who will be hosting the HorseQuest Masterclass.

Admission: Advance non-member day tickets from £14 for adults and £8 for children. Children 6 and under go free

British Carriagedriving National Championships 18-20 September

➡ Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire

If you want a mix of skill, thrill and something a bit different, take some time to watch the National Driving Championships in the beautiful setting of Cirencester Park in Gloucestershire.

Similar to eventing, it's a three-day competition, with dressage followed by the 17km marathon with obstacles, and finally the climactic cone driving.

Admission: Free



Royal County of Berkshire Show

19–20 September

➞ Newbury Showground, Berkshire

One of England's best county shows, there is so much on over the weekend in Berkshire. There are the traditional draws including the grand parade of livestock, a coaching marathon, cookery theatre, a vintage machinery area, an old fashioned funfair and more than 500 tradestands. But there are also some attractions you may not get to see very often, including llama egg-and-spoon races, thrilling sports displays, farriery competitions and a mass ascent of hot-air balloons at the end of each day.

Admission: Advance day tickets are £15 for adults and £5 for children. Children 4 and under go free

Arena UK Festival of Showjumping

21–27 September

➞ Arena UK, Allington, Lincolnshire

Don't miss out on a week of showjumping, including highlights of Six Bar, Puissance and Major Grand Prix classes. The festival attracts more than 1,500 competitors from all over the UK, including the top professionals. The Grand Prix has a first place prize of £20,000 (the highest first prize currently available in Great Britain) and will be hotly contested.

Admission: £6 per car

British Vaulting Championships

26–27 September

➞ Pencoed College, Bridgend, South Wales

Why not have a horsey day out with a difference and watch the British National Vaulting Championships? This hugely exciting and visual sport is always very impressive – it's a quirky mix of gymnastics (with just as many rhinestones and sparkly outfits!), lively music and beautiful, well-trained horses. What more could you want? All team and individuals will compete on Saturday 26, with the top five from each class qualifying for the finals on Sunday 27.

Admission: Free



Bring on Burghley

*The Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials,
Burghley House, Lincolnshire, 3–6 September*

With more than 160,000 visitors over four days, 600 carefully-selected exhibitors, 80 of the world's top riders and a prize fund of £250,000, 21st Century Burghley Horse Trials is a far cry from the event it was when it began in 1961. In the last 54 years, Burghley has hosted two World Championships and six European Championships – more than any other horse trials. Today, the event has become one of the most popular and highly regarded within the equestrian and social calendars, and ranks within the UK's top 10 national sporting occasions by attendance.



Follow [@LRBHT_Official](#) and [#LRBHT](#) on Twitter for updates in the run-up to Burghley

Head to head

William Fox-Pitt has won the event six times, more than any other rider, most recently in 2011. Andrew Nicholson has won Burghley five times and has been champion with Avebury for the last three years running. At Badminton in May, Nicholson led throughout the competition, but dropped to sixth place following a disappointing showjumping round, crushing dreams of his first Badminton win after 35 completions. Fox-Pitt went on to claim the Badminton title, so could we be in for another Nicholson-Fox-Pitt showdown come showjumping day, or could Andrew break another record and clinch the crown for a fourth year in a row?



Don't miss...



Main arena:
9.00–17.30 Dressage
12.30 Defence Animal
Centre military working
dog display

Ring 2:
9.30–17.00 Pony Club
team jumping



Main arena:
9.00–17.00 Dressage
12.30 and 16.30 Dressage
display with Ferdi Eilberg

Ring 2:
9.00–17.00 Dubarry Burghley
Young Event Horse finals
12.30 Show of British-bred
sport horse stallions



11.00–17.00
Cross-country



Main arena:
9.00 Final horse inspection
10.30 Showjumping
12.00 Racehorse to Riding Horse HOYS qualifier
14.00 Band display
14.30 Showjumping
15.45 Parade of foxhounds
16.00 Presentation of prizes

Ring 2
9.00–17.00 BSPS sports pony classes

Advance tickets

(valid until 24 August)

- Thursday £14
- Friday £14
- Saturday £26
- Sunday £14
- Season (whole event) £53
- 12 and under FREE
- Car passes £10
- You'll need grandstand tickets for the showjumping (from £10.50 – these seats usually sell out in advance). Covered seating can also be reserved for the dressage (from £12.50) and cross-country (from £6.50).



Pay us a visit...

Horse&Rider will be in The World of the Horse Pavilion, located near the Lion Bridge. Housing more than 40 exhibitors, including firm favourites such as Feedmark, Mountain Horse and WOW Saddles, The World of the Horse is packed with businesses with a wealth of information, and plenty of new and innovative products.



Horse&Rider
magazine

FOR MORE
INFORMATION AND
A FULL LIST OF
EXHIBITORS, VISIT
worldofthehorse.com

Book your tickets
to see *War Horse* at
warhorseonstage.com



Meet...

Sam Wilmott, War Horse Puppeteer

Georgia Guerin went to the New London Theatre to see War Horse, then popped backstage to speak to puppeteer Sam Wilmott and find out exactly how it all worked...

War Horse has won legions of fans with its emotional portrayal of the First World War, first on stage and then on screen. I went backstage at the West End show to speak to Sam Wilmott, the production's longest-serving puppeteer, who currently controls the hind end of Tophorn.

The main structure of the puppets is aluminium and cane that has been soaked in water and then moulded into shape. Joey and Tophorn weigh 54 and 64kg respectively. Depending on the weight of the rider, we may be carrying up to 150kg.

Each puppet is controlled by three puppeteers – the head, the heart and the hind end. The heart and hind end are positioned underneath the main body, and carry the weight of the puppet, which is attached to a backpack, leaving our hands free to control the indicators. Another puppeteer controls the head with a pole. We each have two indicators – emotional and technical. The head's technical indicator is the directional focus of the horse's head and the emotional is his ears, which tune into everything that is going on around him, just as a real horse would. The heart and hind end's technical indicators are the legs and their change of gait. The heart's emotional indicator is the breathing, which changes to reflect the horse's state. I control Tophorn's hind end and I use the tail as his emotional indicator by using a bicycle brake in each hand, one for vertical movement and one for horizontal movement.

We often have a limited view of each other, but we communicate through our breathing. If one of us changes the way we're breathing, the others know

that they are changing their emotional and technical cues, and we can react to this. We have no leader and although our route is plotted and practised, each night involves lots of improvisation. Much of who changes direction and pace depends on who can see, as we often have restricted vision, but we also practise our awareness of where we are on stage and our relation to everyone else on it.

To learn the equine behaviour we went on a trip to a yard to watch the horses and even though I have been with *War Horse* for two-and-a-half years, I still spend a lot of time watching videos of horses for homework – we never stop

learning. I watch every move they make, what they make it in response to and the different footfalls for each gait. We need to be so accurate.

It was never intended that the puppets would vocalise, but we started playing about with noises in rehearsal and it was decided to incorporate them on stage. They have been developing continuously ever since. We make the noises on an in-breath, whereas to talk you would normally do so as you breath out. It's hard work, but we're well practised.

I've played Joey and Tophorn and they have very different personalities. Joey is a marathon, because he's the main character and is on stage a lot, whereas Tophorn is a sprint, because when he's on stage he has a lot of movement. It is pretty exhausting – we reckon that as part of Joey we would walk around 13 miles each night. ■



What's on TV for horse lovers

Tune in to **Horse&Country TV** on Sky 253 or online at everywhere.horseandcountry.tv

Start September with a new programme following grassroots riders, **Grassroots Dreams**.

Catch up with all the eventing action with **European Eventing Championship highlights from**

Blair and **extended coverage of Burghley Horse Trials**. **Rudall's Round-Up** also comes from Burghley and Blair. **Vets Essentials** continues with an episode on worming. Watch the highlights from **Longines Global Champions Tour in Vienna**. Don't miss new Australian training series **Ken Faulkner: Horseman of Oz**.

Gold Standard

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- provides the best supplement specification

Feed Optimum to put the balance back into the diet and to optimise your horse's health.



Emma Massingale

"Optimum is the obvious answer. It gives my ponies everything they need to balance their high fibre diet without the bulk of extra feed. Optimum is definitely the optimum choice for me and my wonderful ponies!"

"Since feeding Optimum, we have seen a huge improvement in how Jet is looking and feeling."

Gemma Dresser

"Sensi and Leah's condition and wellbeing is fantastic now they are on Optimum, and they are very contented with life."

Janet Keeley and Zara Lawlor

"Cambridge is getting what he needs, and I don't have to pump lots of food into him."

Joanne Ward

NAF
★★★★★



For more details please call our Nutritional Advice Line: 0800 373 106 or email info@naf-uk.com

www.naf-equine.eu/uk

WIN! Make your horse a model

One lucky reader will win...

- A photoshoot for their horse and a disc of images taken on the day
- A chance for their horse to appear in a Lillidale advert
- A printed copy of a photo of their choice and the advert
- The entire Lillidale Animal Health horse care range, worth £85
- A Lillidale Animal Health branded jacket and polo shirt, worth £105

Two runners up will each win...

- The entire Lillidale Animal Health horse care range, worth £85
- A Lillidale Animal Health branded jacket and polo shirt, worth £105

Lillidale is offering the chance for your horse to become the star of its advert in *Horse&Rider*. The photoshoot of your horse will take place at your yard, with the best image featuring in the advert. You will also receive the new Lillidale Animal Health range of horse care products, formulated from traditional recipes using the best ingredients, as well as branded clothing to remind you of the day! The Lillidale range includes **fly repellent** (RRP £8.99 for 500ml, £12.99 for 1l), **lavender body wash** (RRP £5.99), **cooling body wash** (RRP £4.10), **tea tree shampoo** (RRP £4.50), **medicated shampoo** (RRP £5.90), **citronella shampoo** (RRP £6.99), **herbal shampoo** (RRP £4.60), **mane and tail spray** (RRP £6.99), **mane and tail conditioner** (RRP £5.99), **coat shine spray** (RRP £7.10), **black hoof grease** (RRP £5.99), **neutral hoof grease** (RRP £5.99) and **hoof oil** (RRP £5.49).

Competition rules...

- Winners will be notified on 2 September, the photoshoot will be on 5 or 6 September 2015, subject to Lillidale's availability
- You must have access to an enclosed outdoor area for photos
- Only one horse will be included in the shoot
- You must have the horse owner's permission to enter
- Lillidale Animal Health retains copyright of all images taken
- Winner must be based in mainland UK only



What are the two types of hoof grease in Lillidale Animal Health's new range?

Tie-breaker: Tell us why your horse would be a good model for the Lillidale advert.



WORTH
£1,500



For more information, visit
lillidale.co.uk

To enter:

Answer the question and tie-breaker on the competition entry form on page 160 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk to enter online, and for full terms and conditions. Please also provide one photo of your horse. Entries must be received by 28 August 2015. No purchase necessary.

SHARE, WRITE, TWEET...

If you want to comment on an article in Horse&Rider or share your thoughts, then drop a line to Georgia Guerin – address on p20. Remember to include your contact details and jacket size!

Follow Horse&Rider on



Tweet box

Find out what our favourite horsey people are saying on Twitter this month



@Faye_Gowing

@HorseandRiderUK
Best way to spend a sunny Saturday morning!
#happyhacking



@ckajones

On holiday and missing my horse. Consoling myself with the next best thing
@HorseandRiderUK!



STAR LETTER!

HAPPY ENDING

In 2012, I went to view a gelding for sale. His name was Cheeky Boy. We pulled up in the car and he came bounding over immediately – I fell in love.

The following winter, Cheeky Boy went lame. He was diagnosed with a traumatic injury that had caused floating bone chips in his hocks. He needed joint surgery to repair the damage. While he was recovering, during his second week of in-hand walking, Cheeky Boy got a fright and broke away from me. He ran towards the gate and tried to jump over it. Unfortunately, he didn't make it over the gate and got stuck on top with two legs either side. With help from other liverys and the yard owner, I managed to dismantle the gate and get him off.

At first we thought he was okay, but when the vet checked him we found out that Cheeky Boy had given himself a hernia. He was rushed to the vets again. Amazingly, the hernia fully healed without the need for surgery, although the truss he had to wear gave him several nasty sores, despite the vets trying everything possible to pad it out. Six months later, he was finally allowed to start walking in-hand, which built up to small amounts of turnout and, finally, I could start gentle ridden work. It has been a long, emotional journey, but now Cheeky Boy is back in almost full work and doing really well, he even starred in our wedding photos. He really is a diamond.

Lauren Maclean, via email

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We asked you on our Facebook page whether you thought fly spray alone was enough or do you need to use a fly rug, too?

Selina Mitham

Definitely use a fly rug. The effects of fly spray wear off after a while and certainly if it rains. I have found fly rugs work better even compared to fly spray from the vet on my donkeys and horse.

Adrienne Milne

Most fly sprays don't deter horse flies, so on days when these are prevalent, a fly rug is a must. Otherwise a good scoot with some fly spray and a fly mask are sufficient.

Ruth Dresman

Fly rug at night while out. In during day, fly spray to ride with and sometimes a ride-on fly rug. How can my horse concentrate while she is being eaten alive?

Molly Meyer

Fly rugs are great, but some horses trash rugs or rugs don't fit them well, so fly spray can come in handy. If you're super-cautious, then why not use both?

Sarah Ward

In 26 years I haven't found a fly spray that works. Just need to find a nice breathable fly rug and mask if needed.

Eris Lizzy

I use a fly rug to help prevent UV damage, alongside spraying sensitive areas (belly, sheath, etc) that might not be covered. Not to mention a mask and sun cream to protect my boy's pink skin.

Hannah Petrie Hay

Clearly a physical barrier is more reliable than a chemical one. But both have a place in making a horse as unattractive to midges as possible.

To have your say about horsey issues of the day, visit facebook.com/HorseandRiderMag



ONE STEP AT A TIME

After reading the letters in July *Horse&Rider*, I thought I would share my story, too. I've had my horse, Coco, for just under a year. He's the first horse my partner and I have owned after both loaning for years. I'm now in touch with Coco's breeder, who has been brilliant at filling in some gaps, sending me photos of him as a foal and giving me information about the people she sold him to. Both my partner and I have worked very hard to build up Coco's trust, especially as he wasn't very keen on men to start with due to problems in his past. He's now very content following us around and is enjoying life being loved.

We reached a rather sticky point in April when I realised Coco had a fear of cows – I had a nasty fall when he bolted but, with the help of other liverys, we are now returning to confidence. This photo shows how much more settled he is two months' later, with a lot of effort and patience!

Jo Page, via email

MY LUCKY DAY

I've been riding since I was four years old and have always dreamed of owning my own horse.

Last month, a friend of mine spotted an advert for a horse who sounded perfect for me. At first, I didn't want to go and look at her because I knew that my parents would not allow me to bring her home, but the temptation became too much and I went anyway. I fell in love with her and came home and told my parents. To my surprise, they didn't immediately

say no, but said they would think about it if I did some research on the financial side of horse ownership.

A week later, I went back to see the mare with my mum. Within a day, my parents arranged a vetting. Everything happened so quickly and I could not believe my luck. I hadn't had to do any more convincing, I was overwhelmed. Tiny Dancer has been part of my family for just over a week now and words can't describe how lucky I feel.

Lea Virchow, via email



★ Horse&Rider thank you...

The sender of our star letter will receive a Toggi GBR Berlin jacket, worth £89 – available in navy, in sizes XS-XXL. Waterproof and breathable to protect against showers, this unisex blouson is made from a super-soft fabric with elasticated hem and adjustable cuffs to keep out the chill. To find your local stockist, see toggi.com or call 0113 2707000.

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@EmmaMassingale

Some days it's cool to just chill out and enjoy being really happy!
#theislandproject
#Connemara



@Harry_Meade

Enjoying a rare weekend off and teamed up with @griffiths_sam for some serious business!



@TrevorBreen1

(International showjumper, Trevor Breen)

Mia said: "Daddy has to jump this, it's so HUGE!" Thanks for reminding me Mia!



Grand day out

Thank you so much for the tickets I won with *Horse&Rider* to Bolesworth International. It's the first big event I have ever been to and it was fantastic. The atmosphere was amazing and the showjumping was incredible, with lots of other great activities in between. I want to be a showjumper and I'm now going to work even harder helping out at a yard in return for a lesson. The competition tickets were for two adults and I wanted to take the lady who has taught me how to care for horses, but she had to put her horses first, so I took my mum, my brother, and his friend, too.

Rachael Turrell



Give it a go

I recently went to the USA on holiday and had my first taste of Western riding – and horse training. When I arrived for my first ride, all 15 horses were standing tacked up, side-by-side, dozing in the shade. At home, standing one horse so close to another would be unthinkable and yet there were no squeals or kicks. During the ride, one of the guest's horses spooked and refused to walk past a log, so a wrangler hopped off his horse and ground-tied him while he dealt with the offender. I can't imagine any of the horses I know at home standing so calmly when freedom is just a couple of strides away! Now I'm home, I am determined to find out how to incorporate some of this amazing training with my own horse.

Judy Bland

ARIAT

Inspiration of the month

Tracie Lavelle says her fiancé, Kevin, has supported her over many years



In 2009, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Over the next 18 months, I had two operations, a series of chemotherapy and herceptin treatment. It was all very gruelling, but made so much easier by my fiancé, Kevin.

Kevin took over the running of our livery yard, mucking out 11 stables along with the day-to-day running of the business while I was out of action after each op and session of chemotherapy. Unfortunately, in 2011 the cancer returned. This resulted in me having to have a mastectomy and, once again, Kevin stepped up and took care of everything.

I've now been clear of cancer for four years, but Kevin still works endlessly. He does all the cooking, which he enjoys, and never moans, but just supports me with my

eventing. After helping me with everything, he sometimes has time to enjoy riding and driving his gypsy cob stallion, Jack Daniels. He is my rock. I couldn't have managed without him and I really appreciate all his extra help.



Tell us why your horsey inspiration deserves this award, and they could win Ariat Olympia breeches and a Team Waterproof jacket, worth £255!

Send a clear photo, SAE for its return, and contact details for you and your inspiration, to: Ariat Inspiration of the Month, *Horse&Rider*, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG or email georgia@djmurphy.co.uk

For full terms and conditions, visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk



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PET OF THE MONTH



My dog, Tess, is great at lungeing. She can even get my horse to change the rein.

Tina Phillips, West Midlands



The owner of each pet featured will receive £25-worth of vouchers to spend at viovet.co.uk, the UK's top-rated online pet and equine retailer. VioVet has a huge range of supplements, medications, pet food, tack, rugs and more, all at great prices.

If you want to share your thoughts, send your letters to Georgia Guerin, Letters Editor, *Horse&Rider*, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG, with photos if they're relevant and an SAE for their return, or email georgia@djmurphy.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!

Articles, photos and drawings welcomed but we cannot be liable for their safe return – enclose an SAE. Every effort is made to ensure that the information and advice contained in all articles is correct and appropriate, but no responsibility for loss or damage occasioned to any person acting or refraining from action in reliance on or as a result of anything included in or omitted from such articles can be or is accepted by the authors, the publishers, their employees or any other person connected with D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd. Save as expressly permitted by law, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written authority of D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd. Copyright D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd.

Bringing up baby

ALL GROWN UP

Our trainer



Dan Greenwood is a dressage rider and trainer. He has won many national Championships and ridden for GB at Small Tour, as well as coaching up to Grand Prix.

Our model



GF De Ville, 'Bertie' is a 10-year-old stallion by Dimaggio. He's owned by Sandy Senior and competes at Small Tour level.

In the last part of our series on training the dressage horse, Dan Greenwood explains the refinements he makes to highly-schooled horses, and sheds light on how to get the most from a schoolmaster

The early years of careful training of the basics really pay off when a horse matures – it's the culmination of all that hard graft and makes it completely worth it! When you watch an experienced horse showing off high-level movements, it's easy to imagine that he's learnt all he needs to, but in truth the schooling never stops, although the tweaks I make with an advanced horse like Bertie (our model this month) are much more subtle than with a younger horse.

Being a good rider means being a questioning one and no matter what level you are riding at or your horse is working at, the same questions apply. I continually ask myself questions to check that neither me nor my horse are slipping into bad habits. Is the contact how I want it? Is the horse as straight as I want him to be? Has he dropped behind the bit or come in front of it? Does he bend when I ask? Whatever I'm doing with my more advanced horses, I keep coming back to these basic checks. ➤

► How to develop the perfect warm-up ► Keeping a schoolmaster happy

Core principles
Fine-tuning
Flexibility
Adjustability



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I find it really helpful to think ‘two ears, two shoulders, two hips’ – if I want straightness, when I check my horse are all those things where I want them? If the answer is ‘Yes’, then great and I ride the movement. If the answer’s ‘No’, I will adjust him so he is where I want him before I get going.

It’s also important to make sure you can move your horse’s head without his shoulder moving – keep checking that you can put his ears up, down and to either side without moving his shoulder. It’s essential to have full control of him before you begin a movement.

It’s impossible to get a good mark if your horse cannot get the basics absolutely spot-on

I’m always thinking about this, even with my young horses, but almost even more so with a horse who is moving up the grades, because those simple foundations are a key part of gaining good marks at the higher levels and it’s impossible to get a good mark if your horse cannot get those basics absolutely spot-on. For example, there’s no point in being able to produce piaffe steps if they’re crooked. Straightness is paramount and the basics are always key.





Common principles

The principles that apply when you're working with an older horse are actually applicable in some way to all training. A common fault with more experienced horses is to niggle at him, wanting all the time to have a horse who goes like Valegro. But neither you nor your horse will ever be happy if you set unrealistic targets. Instead, work with what you have, not what you think he should be. For example, if your horse has learned how to produce a flying change, but he is happier in a rounder, deeper outline in the change, then leave him there to begin with. You can work on bringing his frame up to where you need it bit by bit.

Keep him sweet

Older, more experienced horses can have their own issues that you must work with. For example, schoolmasters often have quite a bit of tension in their bodies and they might even be a little sour or resistant. This can come with age and having done the same work for a long time. If you're taking on a schoolmaster, don't necessarily be put off by these things – he will have a lot to teach you, but it's a case of working within his limitations.

The first thing to do is to find the level where your horse is comfy. One of the most important things is to work out where he is happy in his neck – by this I mean whether he finds it easier with his neck a little higher or lower. Often letting a horse drop his neck a bit will help him to settle and relax. For example, he might be a lot happier if you ride a pirouette with his neck down rather than up – working in a higher outline is harder than a slightly lower one. Having said that, there are horses who will find their work easier if their shoulders are up. It's important to remember that your horse is an individual, and it's your responsibility to find where he is comfy and relaxes, and to go with it.

If you're taking on the ride on a horse who has had some schooling, part of the task is to train him to the way you want him to go. This can be difficult and at times frustrating, but take it slowly and it'll be worth it. Correctness is important, but the horse you have is the horse you have and if his age means there are certain things he finds easier one way or another, then live with that. Be realistic, but focus on keeping him forward. ➔

Warm-up

At this level of training, it's all about tiny tweaks that help boost marks, so everything the rider does has a big impact. While your horse is progressing through the early years of his training, you will need to adjust your warm-up routine based on his experience, fitness and how he copes with the atmosphere at a

show. To an extent, this is still true for older horses, but finding a warm-up routine that works for your horse and for you is an essential part of producing a good test.

I think it's important to begin your warm-up by focusing on your outside aids. If you're forever pushing your horse

out rather than moving him in, you will always struggle with straightness, especially in canter. Leg-yield is a great exercise to include in your warm-up. Use long, shallow lines – for example, a leg-yield that only moves over one metre could take almost the whole long side of the arena. This helps stop a common problem, which is horses who offer too much neck bend and are wrapped around the rider's inside leg, rather than being straight. It's easiest to spot this fault in canter – ask someone to watch you from the ground to see if you're guilty or look in arena mirrors. So many riders forget about the outside of their horse, but if you can focus your attention on getting complete control of the outside of your horse, then suddenly his outside shoulder will come up and everything changes – it's like riding a different horse!

So many riders do all their warm-up at the same tempo. That's another big mistake – make sure that right from the beginning of your warm-up you ask for frequent changes of tempo. I'm not talking about going from piaffe to extension, but ask your horse to stretch, then slow a little, then go a bit faster. As you do this, ask yourself 'Is his head where I want? What about his nose?'. It's that subtle attention to detail that will make your test the winning one.

Don't just trot around the arena to loosen his muscles – while that's a commendable thing to do, it's not enough to get your horse test-ready and you can supple him up just as effectively while working him properly. Make every step count. If you ride like this at home (which of course you should!), then you will already be tuned into those tiny changes in gear – if you aren't so picky at home, then he will struggle with this at a show. It's another reason for being really exacting with yourself and your horse whenever you set out to do some schooling, because horses produce much better work when they have clear boundaries and understand what is expected of them.



It's important to be able to collect your horse...



...before you begin extension work



Prepare for the change by compressing the canter



“Once your horse can produce a flying change from a good-quality canter and stay calm about the whole process, it's time to begin to work on compression and expression in the change”

Spinning around

One of the exercises that come quite late to a horse's training is the canter pirouette. While turns on the haunches are something that youngsters learn quite early on, a fully-fledged canter pirouette is really hard work. Last month, I showed you how I teach pirouette canter (*Horse&Rider* July issue, p22), which is the key to a good pirouette. It's also important to be able to ride a good-quality shoulder-in so you can engage the inside hindleg and have control of the outside of his body – this helps you to keep his inside shoulder up so that he can keep moving around the pirouette.

A common mistake people make with pirouettes is to try to push the horse round with their outside leg. This isn't the right feel at all, you must feel like you're turning his shoulders with your reins. The sequence goes...

- Sit into the saddle
- Balance your horse
- Bring his front end around

At the time, think of keeping him sitting behind. Don't try to push it with your leg. That's a really important feel. Thinking of it like this will help to encourage the turning feel, rather than the pushing feel, so even if you've started out on the wrong track, you can use this to correct yourself.

If your horse is finding it hard, place his neck a little lower than normal – this makes things easier for him and will allow you to ride a more correct movement. He will need to be up in his frame for good marks in a test, but to begin with it's much more important to get the movement correct so he understands what you want, then adjust the frame once he's more practised at it. There's plenty of time to begin to lift his neck into a more correct outline and it will become easier for him as he gets stronger, too.



The half steps that began when a horse was around seven years old have now progressed into a recognisable passage. This advanced movement is great for checking that your horse is still really focused on what you want him to do, and is especially useful after you've been working on extensions.

Change it up

A mature horse will have developed flying changes, but there's always room to polish them. Once your horse can produce a change from a good-quality canter and stay calm about the whole process, it's time to begin to work on compression and expression in the change. You will achieve this by playing with the canter before the change – how bouncy can you make it? How elevated? The more time your horse has in his moment of suspension, the easier it will be to make the change full of expression. But don't be tempted to overdo things, particularly with the changes. Ride the exercise a couple of times, then stop and do the complete opposite. If you were collecting him, then the next exercise should be really forward. If he was bent around your right leg, then choose something that requires him to be completely straight. Keep changing it up – that's the key to keeping a more advanced horse sweet and happy in his work. And then it's all easy!



Sit up and quietly during the change



Ride positively forward from the change



Easy mistakes to make

- **Pushing in pirouettes** – if you feel as though you're pushing your horse around a pirouette, then the feeling is all wrong. He should be up and straight in his shoulder, and it's your reins that should be helping to bring his shoulders around, not your outside leg that's pushing him over.
- **Too much bend** – allowing your horse to curl around your inside leg and bend too much through his body and neck is tempting, but to ride more advanced movements he must learn to maintain a good-quality outline

while being straight in his body. Be strict with yourself and don't allow him to fall into bad habits, because you will just have to undo them at some point and suffer poorer marks until you do!

- **On repeat** – don't keep riding the same exercise or similar types of exercise – for example, lots of work that requires collection – without mixing things up with something completely different. This helps keep your horse guessing, and stops his muscles getting sore and his brain from becoming bored. If you're after good results, change it up!

Dan's
exercise book



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of the series?

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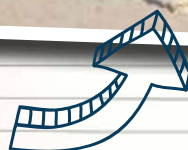


Pirouettes

A perfect pirouette is made or ruined well before you begin to ride the movement itself. Getting the canter correct, and your horse completely balanced and straight is key, and this exercise will help you ensure that your canter is as good as it can be...

- In canter, ride off the short side onto the three-quarter line in shoulder-in. Establish good, clear steps before asking your horse to move fluidly into canter half-pass.
- Ride half-pass to the centre line, then half-halt and return to riding a few strides of shoulder-in.
- If your horse is unfazed by this, half-halt again and ride a pirouette. If he reacts negatively in any way, or you struggled to control the shoulder or to get the correct amount of bend, then ride forward around the arena before repeating the exercise.

Don't begin to ride the pirouette itself until he's really listening and focused in this exercise. ■



Rate this issue for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see page 9). tinyurl.com/RateSept15

Multi-tasking hacking

The sun is shining and the days are long – it's the perfect time to get out into the great outdoors with your horse. Get inspired, improve your schooling and boost your confidence with Lucinda Fredericks



As told to Kelly McCarthy-Maine. Photos: Trevor Meeks. With thanks to Lucinda Fredericks, lucindafredericks.com

Our expert



Lucinda Fredericks has won some of the world's toughest four-star events, including Burghley, Badminton and Kentucky, all on her diminutive 15.3hh chestnut mare, Headley Britannia. She now competes on Brit's offspring, as well as several up-and-coming event horses.

Our models



Britannia's Mail is a seven-year-old stallion and Headley Britannia's eldest son. He combines stud duties with an eventing career.



Little Britannia 'Millie' is the seven-year-old daughter of Headley Britannia. A talented chestnut mare, Millie has had great success as a young event horse.



Cos I Will began his career as a showjumper, before turning his hoof to eventing. Now in his second season, Cos competes at CIC** level.

Riding your horse is the best part of the day, so you've got to make it count. I like to squeeze every ounce of goodness out of my hacks by multi-tasking – no more wandering around the countryside!

Just because you have left the arena doesn't mean that you can switch off and amble aimlessly through a field. It's much safer and more fun for everyone if you ride positively and with purpose, whether you are hacking through the village, trotting along a bridleway or cantering up a hill. Horses take their confidence from their rider and can start to feel a bit insecure if their normally purposeful jockey suddenly abandons them and sits like a passenger out hacking.

Plus, just about every horse can be improved through hacking and riding out, whether the biggest benefit comes from improved fitness and strength as a result of working over undulating ground, learning to cope with surprises and new situations or even just perking up by working in a natural environment. And it doesn't do us riders any good to go round and round an arena, either. You have to stay alert and use your core strength to stay in balance over more rugged terrain when hacking, which is a good workout that you are likely to feel the next day.

To get the full range of benefits from hacking, you've got to approach riding out as a continuation of your training and schooling. Hacking is more than just wandering from A to B and chatting to your friends. Whether you are focused on improving the quality of your schooling, in need of a confidence boost or longing for inspiration, by 'hacking like you mean it' you can make every minute in the saddle count. ➤

I once had a working pupil from America who had never ridden a horse on grass in her life. She had to learn what it felt like for a horse to work on a natural surface. One of the best assets a yard can have is access to good hacking – I think the hills of Salisbury Plain have been the making of my best horses



TASK: SCHOOLING

Free walk

Horses tend to be naturally more forward-thinking out hacking than when they're in the confines of an arena and this can help develop a great free walk on a long rein.

To start free walk on a long rein, keep your leg on while allowing your horse to lower and stretch out his head and neck. It's not a free walk on a loose rein, and you may need to keep your horse interested in the bit by flexing your fingers and keeping your leg on.

In a good free walk, your horse will swing through his back and cover as much ground as possible without looking rushed. He should also over-track, with the hind feet landing clearly in front of the footprints of the fore feet.

Extended walk

Horses tend to be more motivated on the way home, so use that forward-thinking mentality to your advantage and practise coming in and out of extended walk. In extended walk, your horse should cover as much ground as possible without rushing and will have a slightly longer frame than in medium walk, while keeping his ears in line and at the same height as his withers.

Top tip

Practise free walk up a hill as the incline will help engage your horse's hindlegs.



Shoulder control

As he progresses in his fitness and schooling, your horse should start to feel as though he is lifting up through his shoulders as he gradually starts to take more weight onto his hindlegs and lighten his forehand. The stronger he becomes, the more like a powerboat he will feel – with the power and steering controlled from the motor at the back.

You have greater control, balance and manoeuvrability when your horse is off this forehand. Here are a few exercises I like to use out hacking to help get better control of my horses' shoulders...

Leg-yield on a circle

Begin on a 15-metre circle in trot and ask your horse to move away from your inside leg, spiralling out to a larger circle. The goal is to maintain a slight inside flexion, while keeping your horse from falling out through his shoulders.

The aim is for his hindlegs to start to step under and across as you slowly spiral out onto the bigger circle. Once you reach a 25-metre circle, change the bend and ask him to move away from your outside leg, spiralling back onto the smaller circle.

This is a great exercise to build strength and suppleness because your horse has to engage his hindlegs to lift and push sideways. Spiralling in and out is also a good way for you to practise co-ordinating your aids. If you create too much bend, your horse will fall out through his shoulders, while not enough support from your outside leg will mean he doesn't step under and across enough.

If you want to make the challenge even tougher, try riding the spiral in canter – it's a real challenge! But it will help your horse balance and learn to lift his shoulders – all excellent preparation for counter canter.

Travers and shoulder-fore on a circle

Being able to move your horse's front and back ends independently around your leg will help build his strength, free up his shoulders, and encourage him to lift off the forehand and take more weight behind.

Working your horse towards travers (quarters-in) on a circle will help build strength and suppleness. Start by asking for just a few centimetres of travers before moving his shoulders across into a feeling of shoulder-fore.

This is hard work for your horse and a test of your ability to co-ordinate your aids, so take your time to get it right!

Revolutionary new balancer

Two years' research

After two years of research and development, Blue Chip has used its expertise in balancers and supplements to formulate the first super-concentrated, calming balancer. Research showed owners and riders wanted their horses to be healthy, look amazing, be sensible to handle, and a pleasure to ride. They also wanted a product that was easy to carry and store, simple to be delivered if ordering on line, easy to use and that brought real results.

Super-concentrated

Known for being at the forefront of modern nutrition, Blue Chip used advances in manufacturing processes and research into optimum feeding techniques to create the first super-concentrated calming balancer in a tub, with all the advantages of a superior-quality feed balancer combined with ingredients that have been shown to help horses become calm and settled. This revolutionary product is so nutrient-dense that it will last a pony up to 14hh approximately two months and a 16hh horse approximately one month. The amounts needed are so small it can be fed by hand or with other feeds.

Small but mighty

Blue Chip Super Concentrated Calming Balancer has no whole cereals or molasses, so it is low in sugar and starch. It contains optimum levels of vitamins, minerals and nutrients, and incorporates Soundhoof – a complete hoof supplement with biotin, methionine and organic zinc – and Primo Vento – a respiratory supplement with garlic, menthol and eucalyptus – along with nucleotides, which aid nutrient absorption, recovery rates and immune response.



Stress management

This new calming balancer uses an easily-absorbed form of magnesium combined with L-tryptophan and camomile, which are all renowned for their calming properties.

Healthy digestion

Horses can become easily stressed, causing the gut flora to become unbalanced, resulting in excess pathogenic bacteria. Feeding a probiotic is a natural way to re-balance the gut, which helps horses to feel more settled and relaxed – we all know that we don't feel at our best when we have an upset stomach. Blue Chip Super Concentrated Calming Balancer also contains a probiotic yeast to help soothe the digestive system. You can rest assured that Blue Chip Super Concentrated Calming Balancer will help your horse be easier to handle while being healthy and looking fantastic.

Case study

All Blue Chip products are first trialled on their own horses. Happy Birthday Blue Chip (Happy) took part in the trials of Super Concentrated Calming Balancer. After a six-day journey from southern Germany, he arrived very stressed and did not want to leave his stable or have his legs and feet touched. He would jump out of his field, even when with a companion. After being fed Super Concentrated Calming Balancer, Happy is a different horse, perfect for the farrier and great to ride. He has even qualified for the Albion Future Dressage Horse of the Year and The Flat Ridden Sports Horse Championships.

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Horses tend to be more motivated on the way home, so use that to your advantage





TASK: CONFIDENCE



Riding your horse can be the best part of the day, but not if your confidence is sagging. A few simple changes can make all the difference when it comes to you and your horse's confidence.

Hack like you mean it

Change a dawdle into a march, trot like you are going somewhere and canter like you are late for the school pick-up or for an important meeting. Changing into a positive mindset will encourage your horse to be brave. Keep your eyes up and focused, and visualise a drama-free hack.



The buddy system

Hacking out with a more experienced horse or confident rider can help you overcome many hacking dramas. Use the experienced horse as a lead away from the yard and past spooky objects. Having someone to chat with while you ride can also help settle your nerves and calm your horse.

*A few simple changes can
make all the difference to
your confidence*



Tram-line trotting

Horses are keenly aware of our mental state and draw on their rider for direction and confidence. Instead of worrying and anticipating trouble out hacking, think of riding your horse through a set of tramlines to a fixed point on your journey – for example, from your yard, down the track, up the hill and to the barn at the bottom of the woods. Your horse will feel your determination and guidance, and grow in confidence, which will help you overcome any hacking niggles.



Security clearance

If your horse is feeling a little fresh, get yourself into a secure position so you feel confident enough to press him forward.

Shorten your stirrups a couple of holes, get your heels down and stand up out of the saddle. Repeat the mantra 'head up, ears up, look up, go forward' until your horse takes a breath and starts to settle, at which point you can lower your hands just enough to hold onto the breastplate or neck strap.



Curving lines

Let the landscape coach you – flex your horse as you follow sweeping lines, change his bend as the path turns, go through the gears within the pace up inclines, and steady and balance him down hills.



Long canter

There is nothing like a long canter to clear the cobwebs. Choose your ground carefully, get into a secure position and pick up canter. The aim is for your horse to be in front of your leg and in a steady rhythm. The length of time you are able to maintain the canter for depends on your horse's level of fitness, so keep a track of time and you'll be able to monitor how his fitness is improving.

Trotting for a few minutes following a long canter will help your horse lower his breathing and heart rate more gradually than coming down directly into walk. ➔



TASK: INSPIRATION

Stuck in a rut? Get out of the arena and find inspiration in the great outdoors

Three's company

If you have a slightly lazy or unmotivated horse, riding out in a group of three horses can do a lot to lift his spirits. Take turns leading and following, riding side-by-side and single file. As always, be mindful of traffic.

Flying changes

Flying changes are fun and feel a bit flash – the perfect way to jolly up a hack. They can come naturally to some horses, while others need a bit of help to get the idea of lifting up and changing their canter lead. I like to play around with flying changes out hacking as horses are often more forward-thinking and balanced – key ingredients for a successful flying change.

There is a long, straight strip of field on the way home on one of my hacking routes that I often use to practise flying changes. Choose the setting for your flying changes carefully – good footing on level ground is best.

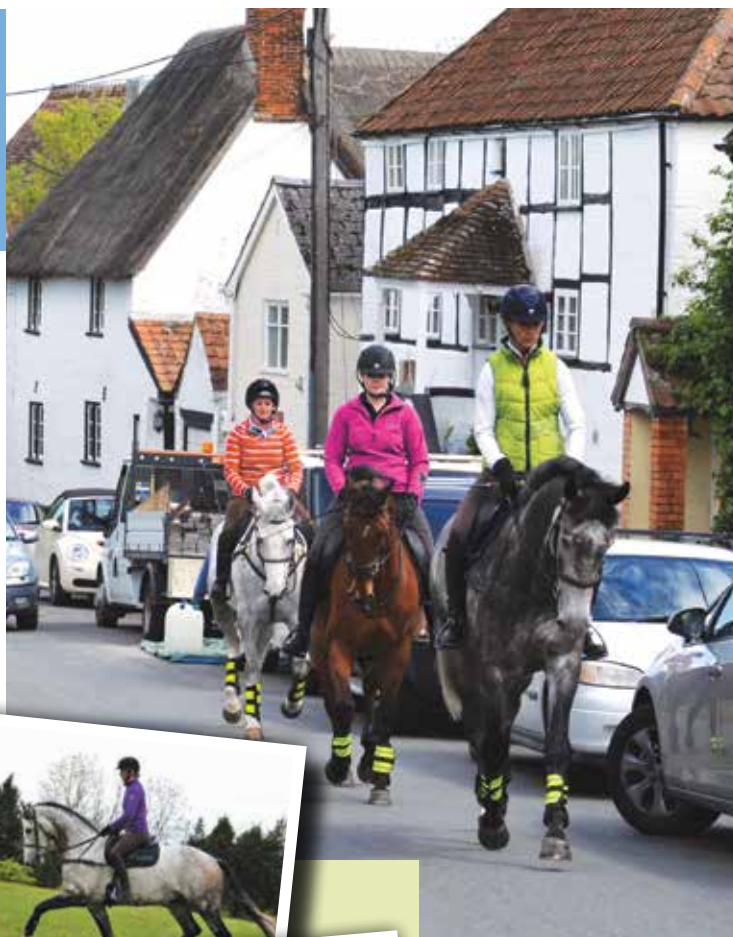
The aids for the flying change need to be obvious and clear for your horse. Don't worry if the change itself is a bit 'rustic' in the beginning, just reward any effort your horse makes towards the flying change – subtlety and refinement can come later.

Start with a balanced, forward canter in a straight line with your inside leg on the girth and your outside leg slightly behind the girth. For example, if you are cantering on the left lead, your right leg would be behind the girth.

Ask your horse to yield to your right leg as you move him slightly sideways to the left. This lightens up the right side of his body, gets him thinking about his hindlegs and helps him punch off the floor with energy. Count out the rhythm of the footfalls in the canter stride, 'one-two-three' and ask for your flying change, keeping the new outside rein.

To ask your horse for the change, swap your canter aid from your right leg behind the girth to your left leg. As you count, imagine the feeling of energising your horse's canter stride so he has an inflated moment of suspension – this is when he is able to pick his legs up and land on the new canter lead.

If he changes in front and not behind, don't panic. Just ask him to change back to the original canter lead and energise the canter before trying again.



Medium trot

You can often encourage your horse to experiment with more 'wow' paces on the way home from a hack. If he has done plenty of work, he'll feel supple, loose and keen to get back to his stable. I often get the best trot work just after cantering up a hill, as my horse continues to push from behind as the ground levels out, which adds extra oomph to his medium trot.

Share a special moment with your horse

I ride horses out all year round in every kind of weather, so I really appreciate it when the weather is kind and I think the horses do, too. Take a moment to appreciate hacking your horse on a beautiful, sunny day. It never fails to make me feel pretty lucky. ■



Next month

Hack your way to a fit, supple and happy horse with Lucinda's strategic hacking plan.



GRIDWORK MASTERCLASS

PART 2:

Settling a fizzy horse

Tame your bold jumper with showjumping advice from John Smart

Having a bold-jumping horse can be a blessing, and a curse. He takes you forward to the fence, sure, but he also has the potential to jump you into trouble. Don't panic, though, because there are some exercises you can practise at home that will help you keep your horse's attention and improve your jumping at the same time.

First of all, don't be tempted to let your horse's enthusiasm replace obedience. Even if he's keen, he must listen to your signals. And don't confuse bold jumping and enthusiasm with being in front of your leg, too. It's perfectly possible for your horse to go quickly and be behind your leg – so test him out. Is he adjustable? Does he allow you to shorten and lengthen his stride when you ask? If not, there's work to do before you even get the poles out.

When jumping a course, it's important that your horse maintains the same working canter you established at the beginning all the way to the end. While you need to keep your leg closed around his sides, don't be tempted to push him forward to every fence, getting faster and faster over each jump. This will result in his canter stride becoming longer and flatter, and puts you at risk of a refusal or a very long – and potentially dangerous – take-off distance to the fence. ➤



➤ Focus an onward-bound horse ➤ Stay in balance no matter where he takes off



Our trainer



John Smart is a British Eventing accredited trainer and has taught showjumping for more than 20 years. He's a Badminton prize-winner, has jumped on British Nations Cup teams, and been in the ribbons at Horse of the Year Show, Hickstead and the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Our models



Stacey Thompson has owned 13-year-old Irish Sport Horse Armani Lad since he was three. They compete in eventing at BE100 level and hope to go Novice this season.



Millie Mclay rides 11-year-old New Forest X Welsh, Strider IV, in Pony Club and BE Novice level.



Sit quietly in the saddle and keep your leg on as you approach the fence

In the zone

To achieve a confident, clear round, you need to get used to a take-off zone that's both half a stride closer to the fence and half a stride further away than the optimal take-off point. The optimum is the height of the jump projected in front of it, but your horse can leave the ground slightly before or after that and still clear the fence easily. If he is cantering in a balanced, rhythmical way, you won't have a problem, but if you rush him the last few strides, then you're at risk of flying the fence way outside this zone.

Make sure your schooling sessions focus on teaching your horse to be on your aids, so that he maintains a balanced, rhythmical canter to a fence and doesn't speed up on the approach. This takes discipline and you need to be honest with yourself about your natural tendencies – are you inclined to rush your horse to the jump? The pole exercises I'll show you in this feature will help, though.

Steady schooling

When you're practising at home, choose exercises that will encourage your horse to maintain rhythm and regularity in his canter – after all, this determines how well he will jump. By concentrating on encouraging your horse to work in a soft contact and in good balance, when you tackle a fence the jump will be just that. But if he's long and flat, there's a good chance that he will knock a pole down.

Don't back down

Your position plays a key part in achieving a clear round, especially if your horse is rather onward-bound. Focus on maintaining a light, balanced seat and riding your horse forward into a soft, elastic contact. If you meet the fence on a perfect stride, having the perfect position to match is straightforward enough, but if your horse takes off a little further away or closer than you'd like, you're at risk of position problems that could affect your horse's jump.

Too close – don't anticipate take-off by assuming a jumping position before your horse has actually taken off (top right). This might sound easy, but watch competitors at a show and you'll see that lots of people fold too early – it's as if they're trying to jump for their horse. This never works! It just loads your horse's forehand and makes it much harder for him to jump cleanly, as well as making your position insecure. And it's also the best way to get left behind over the fence. Instead, sit quietly and keep your leg closed around your horse's sides.

Too far away – in this instance, it's easy to end up behind the movement (right). Your weight being in the wrong place can cause your horse to tighten his back and, therefore, drop his back legs early, knocking a pole.



Your position plays a key part in achieving a clear round, especially if your horse is rather onward-bound

Exercise one

Pole on a circle

Canter over a pole on a 20-metre circle. The aim is that your horse doesn't change the speed or rhythm of his canter when he sees the pole. His canter shouldn't alter at all unless you say so – enthusiasm is great, but it's important your horse is still obedient to your signals.

This exercise is all about consistency – it's important to focus on meeting the pole on an even stride. The pole should be in the middle of the canter stride and your horse shouldn't have to lengthen or collect as he canters over it. Practise it every time you ride and you'll soon get the hang of it!



Exercise two

Between two poles

Set up two poles spaced four strides (13.5m) apart. Approach them in a rhythmical, balanced canter and focus on maintaining the canter all the way down the line. If you meet the first pole on a long or short stride, you'll have to react accordingly to make sure your horse can fit in four even strides – ask him to lengthen or shorten to make the distance.

Once you can canter down the line in balance and your horse's strides are even between the poles, raise the second pole to a small vertical. Take care not to jump before your horse does – remember, your shoulders shouldn't move before your horse's front feet come off the ground. ➔



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Exercise three Straight as an arrow

Horses who tend to rush to fences benefit from exercises that make them focus and it's a better way to get their attention than fighting with them. Place a placing pole 2.7m (9ft) in front of a small vertical. Angle two long 3.7m (12ft) poles to form an arrowhead on the landing side of the fence. Approach in trot and pop over the vertical, landing in the middle of the arrowhead and cantering over the apex.

Be prepared for your horse to react to the poles on the landing side the first time he sees them – keep your shoulders above your hips and your leg closed around him. Your horse might prick his ears and look at the poles, and by looking he'll lower his head and soften his back. Often, horses who like to take charge and run on the approach to a jump have a high head carriage, so poles on the landing side of the jump can help soften him.

Once your horse is confident jumping the single vertical, you can add another vertical three strides (14.6m) after the first. Place two poles on the floor in an arrowhead with the ends close together in front of the second small vertical to guide your horse into the base of the fence.

Horses who tend to rush to fences benefit from exercises that make them focus and it's a better way to get their attention than fighting with them



Take time to work on your horse's straightness – it will pay off!



Exercise four Get centred

This exercise is based on the same three-stride line as exercise three. Approach the placing pole in trot, then build the second fence as an oxer with cross-pole front rails. This will help to keep your horse straight over the fence. Changing the jump's look might make him prick his ears and take a look at it, but you can be confident in the knowledge that you've jumped the line previously.

John's top position tip

Keep your shoulder above your hip and remember, it's not 'I'm going, are you coming with me?', but 'You go, I'll follow'.

Straighten up

I much prefer striped poles because they help you check whether you're jumping the centre of the fence and also whether you're straight on your approach.

Strider jumps to the right, but Millie easily corrects him by closing her right leg on approach and take-off. Most horses will jump to one side – learn what your horse's tendency is and focus on correcting him, especially in combinations and related distances.



Work the canter

Use these exercises to establish obedience, collection and focus in your horse in your jump schooling sessions. With a bold and enthusiastic horse, it's important to be consistent, working on his canter rhythm and adjustability every time you ride.

Always focus on getting what you ride for – if you ask for him to trot into an exercise, don't let him shoot off in canter five strides before it.

Make sure you're not rushing, either. There may be some situations – for example, in a related distance – where you need to kick on and ride forward to the jump. But make sure that you re-establish your normal working canter immediately afterwards, so that your horse's canter doesn't become longer and flatter at the next jump. Aim to maintain the same rhythm around the entire course and you'll be on your way to foot-perfect rounds.

The next step is to test that the exercises you've been trying have worked. Set up an oxer away from the grid you've been training through. Once you've ridden through the grid, maintain the quality and rhythm of your canter, and approach the oxer. Don't be tempted to push your horse forward out of the rhythm you've established or jump it for him – sit quietly in balance and allow the fence to come to you. And now you're ready to put it into practise at a competition – good luck! ■



Web extra

Watch John explain how to encourage your horse to jump more carefully
bit.ly/johnsmart-2



Next month

John helps a rider overcome her horse's tendency to spook at coloured fillers



Rate this issue for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see page 9). tinyurl.com/RateSept15

Mary

makes a difference

PART 2

This month, Mary King explains how the simplest of tweaks to your jump training can make for bigger and better results when competing



Our expert



Mary King is one of Britain's most prolific equestrians. She has won two World Championship gold medals as well as silver and bronze Olympic medals. Mary was on the silver medal-winning team at London 2012.

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VioVet

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What you do in jumping sessions at home will set you up whether you're planning to go cross-country or entering a showjumping competition. And if you have solid foundations in place, the chance of making a mistake is much less.

The most important thing is to ensure your horse is thoroughly loosened up before you begin jumping. Remember that the way your horse jumps is slightly different across country to in the showjumping arena. Over coloured poles it's important that he can bascule because a flatter jump can easily mean four faults, whereas cross-country the most important thing is that he quickly folds up his front legs over a jump. ➤

A good position helps you stay in balance



The perfect position

A good jumping position is all-important, and it's slightly different for showjumping and cross-country. Take the time to practise both. For showjumping, sit lightly in the saddle with your pelvis positioned slightly forward, so that your shoulders and upper body stay upright as you travel from fence to fence. Keep your hands soft to let your horse use his neck and body freely over the fence – don't restrict him with a tight rein.

For cross-country, assume a lighter seat, with your bottom out of the saddle and your weight balanced evenly through your legs, and remember to keep your heels down. Avoid positioning your upper body too far forward because this will make you in front of the movement, which could result in a fall if your horse stops suddenly or falters on landing.

A good way to improve your position is to practise over a grid of small fences



If your lower leg slides back, it reduces your stability in the saddle

Look out for legs!

When jumping, pay particular attention to the position of your lower leg – don't allow it to slide back. If you do, you could be putting yourself in a precarious position in the saddle. Anchor your lower leg slightly forward for stability – ask a friend to check your position or video you so you can play it back to see if your leg moves.

A good way to improve your position is to practise over a grid of small fences. You won't have to worry too much about what your horse is doing, so you can focus on your position over the jumps.

Mary's top tip

➤ When showjumping, remember to shorten the length of your stirrups. And for cross-country, shorten them even more, as you must be out of the saddle and getting the weight off your horse's back while galloping from one fence to the next.





Open him up

If your horse is short in the neck and becomes a little closed in his throat area, encourage him to canter with a more open outline. Riding transitions from working to medium canter will help. In working canter, ask your horse onto the bit and round in his outline. Then as he moves forward into medium canter, gradually ask him to open up his frame to help him extend his stride, but make sure that the stride gets bigger and more elevated, not faster. As you come back to working canter, draw your upper body back slightly, keep your leg on and use half-halts to encourage him to engage his hindlegs, keep round in his outline, and stay balanced and in self-carriage.

This will help prevent him pulling down on your hands and falling onto his forehead. And although you're not actually changing into a different gait, ride forward as you would into a true downward transition.

The canter is key

It's your responsibility to prepare your horse as best you can for the fence you want him to jump, so that when he arrives at it, he's in as good a position as possible to jump well. A rhythmical canter is essential, with plenty of impulsion in the stride. Keeping him in an energetic canter will help him arrive at the fence with his hindleg underneath him, which will make it easier for him to push off. Don't just practise at home over a single fence, because this isn't representative of what you will be doing in competition. Instead, ride a course of jumps and ensure that the canter stays rhythmical and energetic from one fence to the next.

The first fence

Warm-up over a small jump to start with. As you come around the corner to the fence, don't do very much with your upper body – keep your hands soft and allow his shoulder to come up for take-off, closing the gap between the front of your body and the top of his neck. You might want to position yourself very slightly forward in the saddle, but over this height I personally wouldn't move at all. Think about it from your horse's point of view – if you transfer your weight forward, you're hindering not helping him as he tries to take off.



As you approach a fence, pay attention to the canter

Keep it quiet

As you approach a fence, pay attention to the rhythm of the canter. Focus on keeping it the same – for example, don't ride forward and then hold back. These changes of weight in the saddle will send mixed messages to your horse.

Sometimes it can be tempting to ride slowly to try to see your stride, but doing this will cause your horse to lose impulsion and his canter will become 'slack'. Then when you drive forward to the fence, his hindlegs will be a long way behind him so he'll be unbalanced and will jump flat.

I like to watch Ben Maher jump – he is quiet in the saddle and hardly moves a muscle. Think about a rider you admire, and try to emulate their style and technique. As a rider, you want to be as quiet as possible on your horse so that he can really use his body and think about what he's doing.

My training

Captain Mark Phillips once passed on a helpful thought about the energy that's required in a horse's canter over more challenging fences, and he likened it to bouncing a ball. If you want the ball to go higher, you don't bounce it faster or slower, you bounce it with extra power so that it comes off the ground more. The canter is the same – if you want more impulsion in canter, sit up and condense the energy into a bouncy stride.



Don't worry about seeing a stride, just focus on keeping a rhythm

Don't worry!

If you struggle to see a stride, don't worry – it took me years to learn how to do it and I was hopeless at placing a horse at a fence! Instead, work on making your horse's canter of good enough quality so that even if you arrive at the fence on a bad stride, your horse can still jump it well.

Cutting corners?

If you have a tendency to steer your horse around corners with a tug on the inside rein, stop it! You may find yourself doing this because your horse doesn't listen to your inside rein, which can result in him falling in with his shoulder. So teach him how to balance and maintain a consistent bend through his body from nose to tail.

As you approach a corner or make a turn to a fence, ask for a small amount of bend with your inside rein, supporting him with your inside leg on the girth. As you reach the corner, keep your inside leg at the girth to push his ribcage out slightly, and keep his shoulder upright and his inside hindleg activated. Maintain a supporting outside rein, and ensure he has the correct bend through his body and shows a smooth curve on the line you're riding. Practise turning onto the centre line and three-quarter lines, thinking of using the inside leg to outside rein as you ride each turn.

To help prevent you turning him with your inside rein or pulling back on the reins, ride with your inside hand positioned more forward. It's a good idea to give and retake the rein occasionally to check that he's in self-carriage and not relying on the rein to help him balance. ■

Mary's top tips

- Spurs will help to increase your horse's reaction to the leg, but don't nag with them all the time otherwise he could become dead to the leg. I prefer to use the rollerball type that glide smoothly across the horse's skin.
- While your horse must learn that extra pressure from your leg means more impulsion, a tap with your schooling whip is acceptable for backing up the leg aid if there's no reaction. Sometimes, just the act of flicking the whip is more effective than the actual deed itself. Make sure, however, that if you ride with a schooling whip, you rest it low against your thigh – don't carry it high like a showing cane.



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Our expert



Emma Massingale

is a free rider, which involves working a team of horses completely at liberty. Having trained horses for 17 years, she specialises in starting youngsters and working with difficult horses.

HEADS UP!

Whether your horse is headshy, or you simply want to get a nervous or young horse comfortable with having his head handled, Emma Massingale is here to help

heads carefully ► How horses learn ► Gain his confidence in handling his head



As told to Lucy Turner. Photos: Malcolm Snelgrove

Handling a headshy horse can be very tricky – even simple tasks like grooming and tacking up can be almost impossible in some of the worst cases. The head and ears are delicate, vulnerable areas of your horse's body and his natural instinct will be to protect them, so if he has experienced any discomfort in these areas – for example, due to someone accidentally removing the bridle too roughly or a veterinary condition such as aural plaques – the chances are he'll be reluctant to have them handled in the future.

Whether you're working with your horse simply to get him more used to having his head handled or you have a horse who is already headshy, being patient and gaining his trust are imperative. Even with a horse who is happy to have his head and ears handled, never take it for granted and always treat these areas of his body with care. It can take seconds to worry your horse and months to repair the damage.

If you suspect that your horse is headshy because of a veterinary problem, have him examined by your vet and ensure he is pain-free before you start the desensitisation process. ►

In preparation

Try to use an enclosed space, such as a stable, to limit the chance of your horse just walking away from the situation. This will save you having to chase him around the yard or school, for example.

I personally like to use clicker training to retrain a headshy horse. If he's a bit nervous or shy, giving him some pony nuts when you click the clicker is a good idea

I personally like to use clicker training to retrain a headshy horse. The clicker lets your horse know when he's done something right and rewards an exact moment, which can be associated with food. It depends on what type of horse you have as to whether using food is useful. If he's a bit nervous or shy, giving him some pony nuts when you click the clicker is a good idea. But if your horse is confident and friendly, you shouldn't need to use a tit bit.



The clicker lets your horse know when he's done something right

Using the clicker

● When using the clicker, it's important that you quit what you're doing as soon as you click. This is particularly important if you're not giving a treat reward, as the reward will be that you've stopped what you're doing.

With the clicker, use a process called approach and retreat. This involves slowly approaching your horse's head with your hand, which will put a certain amount of pressure on him. Stop before you get a reaction from him, click to reward him for not moving away from you, then immediately back away (retreat). Repeat the process several times, gradually moving nearer to the problem area.





Living in a bubble

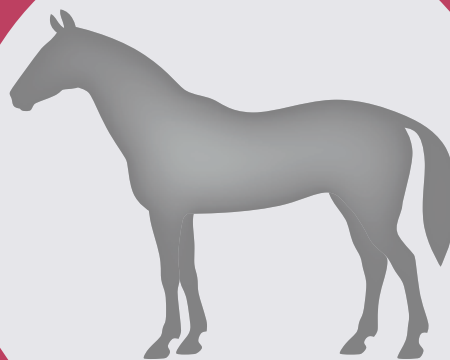
Imagine that your horse has a calm bubble. Outside of that there is a bigger circle where learning stress occurs and outside of that circle, your horse will become reactive. If you push your horse to the point where he becomes reactive, you've gone too far and pushed him beyond learning stress, because he feels like he needs to move his body to get out of the situation.

Ideally, you need your horse to be in a nice, calm state to begin with (the calm bubble). Then put a little bit of stress and pressure on him during the training process, and make it a bit uncomfortable for him (the learning stress circle), but before he feels like he needs to move his feet (the reactive circle), click and back out of the situation. Never persevere so far that he feels he has to move and run away. ➤

Learning stress

Reactive

Calm bubble





When training horses, it's often not until the next day, or even two or three days later, that you start to see an improvement

The retraining process

The retraining of a headshy horse needs to be done every day for five minutes, ideally several times a day. It would make sense that in order to desensitise a problem area, you'd need to keep touching it until the horse got used to you doing it, but this isn't the answer with a headshy horse, as you don't want him to be constantly moving his head and pulling away to get away from you.

To start with, keep your hand fairly secure on your horse's headcollar, so he can't keep pulling away. Don't go for the problem area – such as the ear – straightaway, stroke your horse all over the rest of his body first. When he's okay with the main part of his body being touched, click and tell him he's a good boy, then give him a few seconds to think it over. Next start at a point on your horse's neck or shoulder that you know he'll be comfortable with and stroke him towards his head. Keep the movement slow and avoid being too erratic. Don't push it too far

too quickly, and click and retreat before you get any reaction from your horse. Continue to work carefully and slowly over several days until he's comfortable with you touching his head.

Before considering working with his ears, you should be able to get quite close to them with him remaining fairly relaxed.

The first time you work on the ear, push your hand upwards over the front of the ear, as it's softer and more comfortable for your horse than stroking the ear forwards towards you. Don't use any pressure, just a slow, simple stroke over the ear in one movement. Then click and remove your hand, and give him a few minutes to process it before repeating it.

Once your horse is used to having the front of his ear stroked, move on to stroking the ear towards you. Again, don't use any pressure, just allow the weight of your hand and arm to come over the top of his ear. Never grab a horse's ear under any circumstances.

If you find your horse is really struggling and keeps moving his head away before you've even got to his ear, stroke him a little further away from his ear where he is more comfortable, then work on creeping your strokes closer to his ear. Approach the area that's difficult, but click and retreat before you get a reaction. ■



Steady progress

With horses, it's often not until the next day, or even two or three days later, that you start to see an improvement. The first couple of days are simply about repeating the exercise over and over. Always start each new session at a point you know your horse is going to be comfortable with – the neck is a good place.



Web extra

To see how Emma retrains a headshy horse, visit bit.ly/emma-headshy



Next month

Emma shows you how to handle a horse who is a problem to catch



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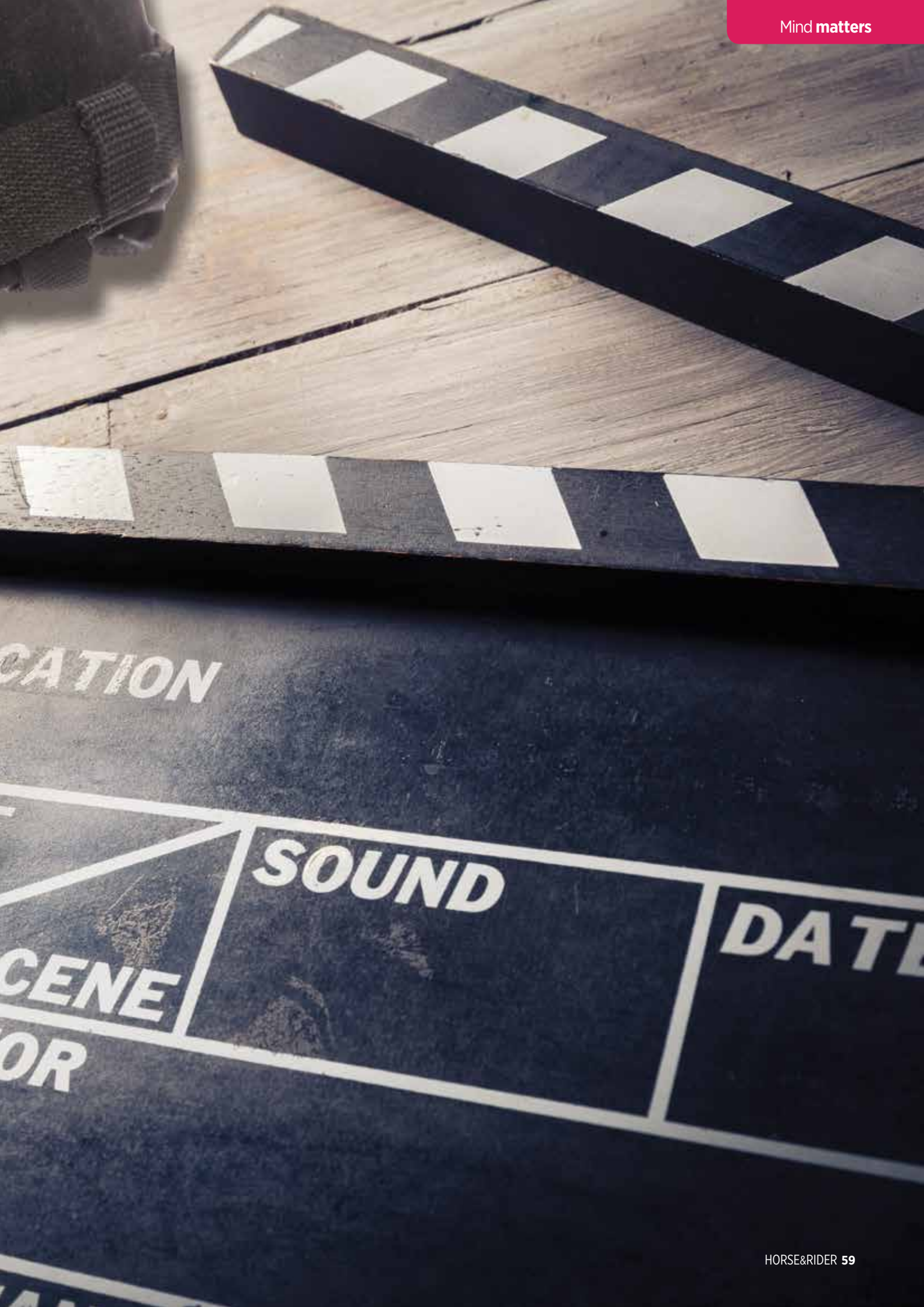


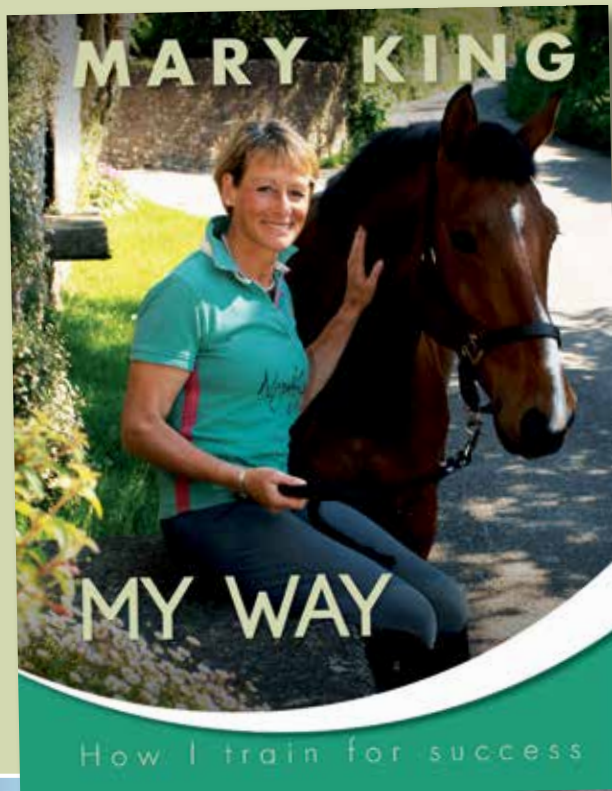
BECOME A **CONFIDENT RIDER** PART 3: PRODUCING YOUR CONFIDENCE MOVIE

Whether you want to compete or ride for fun, overcoming nerves is key. Jo Davies explains how developing a confidence blueprint can help

Just imagine you're hacking your horse in an open field. You can smell the morning dew on the damp grass and think how perfect the ground is for a canter. As you move into trot, your horse shakes his head and snorts loudly. You chuckle, 'Nothing to be excited about', although you can almost taste the anticipation as he enthusiastically picks up canter. He pulls keenly against your hand, so you half-halt quietly and his ears flick back, listening to you. You hear his hooves drum against the turf beneath you and relax into his comfortable rhythm. As you see his stride extend, you feel the thrilling rush of fresh air on your face and a welcome surge of adrenalin. At this moment, there is nothing else you would rather be doing.

How well were you able to bring these words to life? You might have been able to smell the morning dew, hear your horse snorting or feel his powerful canter, despite this information not actually being present in real life. Experiencing these senses within your mind is called imagery. ➤





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Confidence blueprints

Imagery allows mental practice of a task before physically undertaking it – a mental dress rehearsal, if you like. Dress rehearsals are generally useful and boost confidence when they go well. Imagery contains two key elements...

1. **The environment** What you sense around you – for example, feeling your horse pull and hearing the drum of his hooves.
2. **Your response** Emotions, physical reactions and actions that occur in response to the environment – for example, taking a half halt and relaxing into the canter.

When the environment and your response interlink within imagery, your brain produces a stronger mental association between the two. We call this association a mental blueprint. This mental blueprint then prompts your responses in real life. In other words, if you can imagine responding to a pulling horse with a half-halt, you are more likely to actually half-halt if your horse pulls in real life. Clearly, half-halting is a more helpful response for performance than sitting like a lemon or engaging in a tug of war! We can summarise these links as follows...

Imagery environment + Imagery response = Mental blueprint (MB) → MB used in real life

Take a look at the examples below...

IMAGERY ENVIRONMENT	HELPFUL IMAGERY RESPONSE	HELPFUL MENTAL BLUEPRINT	MENTAL BLUEPRINT USED IN REAL LIFE
Feel: Horse pulls keenly	Rider half-halts quietly (action)	Feel of horse pulling is associated with a half-halt	Rider is more likely to take a half-halt if horse pulls (rather than sit like a lemon or engage in a tug of war)
Sound: Horse snorts loudly	Rider chuckles (emotion)	Sound of horse snorting is associated with happiness	Rider is more likely to chuckle if horse snorts (rather than feel nervous or tense)
Sight: Horse's stride extends ahead	Rider feels a welcome surge of adrenalin (physical reaction)	Sight of stride extension is associated with positive adrenalin	Rider is more likely to feel positive adrenalin if horse's stride extends (rather than panic that the horse is out of control)

Case study

Felicity Newey recently started loaning Drumbally Lady (Precious) when she began sport psychology sessions with Jo. Felicity wanted to work on building confidence and trust in her partnership with Precious, particularly when jumping, with the aim of competing at BE80 and BE90 events in 2015.

Jo explains: "One of the key things we identified was that Felicity was experiencing unhelpful mental images. These images involved Felicity playing out worst case scenarios in her mind, from Precious spooking on a hack to making a mistake when jumping. In turn, these images caused Felicity to worry about upcoming events. The images also changed how Felicity was riding. For example, if Felicity was nervous when jumping, she identified that her lower leg would come off and Precious would lose the impulsion she needed to jump."

Jo and Felicity worked together to construct more helpful images. This included creating an imagery routine for Felicity's first hunter trial with Precious. Felicity continues: "I was worried about how excitable Precious might become in a busy warm-up or in windy weather and how I would cope with that. Jo asked me to imagine key parts of the hunter trial, such as jumping a practice fence. First, I imagined my ideal environment of a quiet warm-up and calm weather, and my helpful reactions such as feeling confident and having my leg on to create impulsion. Then, I incorporated my less ideal environment into the imagery, such as wind and rain. Despite the conditions being imperfect, in my mind I was still able to maintain my helpful reactions. This helped me to feel prepared for whatever conditions might arise on competition day and more confident that I would be able to react to Precious in the way I wanted." Felicity and Precious went on to jump clear around the hunter trial and won their first BE80 event together.



The rider in the example is more likely to feel confident in responding to her horse pulling, snorting or extending in real life, since she has already imagined her ideal helpful responses (half-halting, happiness, positive adrenalin). Her helpful blueprint has been set. But what about the flipside? Consider how problematic it could be to imagine worst case, unhelpful responses within imagery. For instance, a rider who imagines experiencing physical tension, gripping the reins and panicking (unhelpful responses) when her horse pulls, snorts and extends (environment) creates an unhelpful blueprint. When her horse snorts or pulls in real life, this rider is more likely to feel tense and grip the reins – an unlikely recipe for confidence and success.

Notice how, in the examples on the right, the imagery environment remains identical, yet the rider's imagery response has switched from helpful to unhelpful. Thus, the blueprint created and used in real life is also unhelpful. ➤

IMAGERY ENVIRONMENT	UNHELPFUL IMAGERY RESPONSE	UNHELPFUL MENTAL BLUEPRINT	UNHELPFUL MENTAL BLUEPRINT USED IN REAL LIFE
Feel: Horse pulls keenly	Rider grips tightly on the reins (action)	Feel of horse pulling is associated with gripping reins tightly	Rider is more likely grip the reins tightly if the horse pulls (rather than calmly half-halt)
Sound: Horse snorts loudly	Rider physically tenses (physical reaction)	Sound of horse snorting is associated with tension	Rider is more likely to feel tense if horse snorts (rather than feel happy)
Sight: Horse's stride extends ahead	Rider feels a bubbling rise of panic (emotion)	Sight of stride extension is associated with panic	Rider is more likely to feel panic if horse's stride extends (rather than experience positive adrenalin)

When the environment and your response interlink within imagery, your brain produces a stronger mental association between the two. We call this association a mental blueprint



Producing helpful imagery

Producing helpful imagery is rather like producing a movie. Just as film producers prepare and oversee the making of blockbusters, you have the opportunity to create and experience your own imagery movie. You even get the starring role! The one obvious difference is that your imagery is like a very personal movie. It is created in your mind. This is actually a useful thing. Forget the expensive kit and large crews, the only equipment needed for imagery is your mind, therefore, it is a technique that anyone can learn and use.

With this in mind, the following five steps outline how you can produce your personal imagery movie for improved confidence...

1. Develop your theme – what do you want to imagine?
2. Scriptwriting – plan your imagery content
3. Lights, camera, action – play through your imagery
4. Editing – edit your imagery
5. Take 1, Take 2 – practise your imagery



Step 1:

Develop your theme

Film producers start the movie-making process by brainstorming their blockbuster theme or genre. Similarly, the first step in producing a helpful image is to choose what you would like to feel confident about. Try to pick a specific skill or action to imagine – for example, jumping an 80cm double or cantering in an open field out hacking. This skill or action should match your ability. For instance, it would be relevant for a dressage rider training at Novice level to imagine riding leg-yield. However, this same rider would be unlikely to develop a realistic blueprint of riding a Grand Prix test without first being able to ride movements such as piaffe in real life.

Step 2:

Scriptwriting

Scriptwriters spend months researching and writing their film screenplay. Similarly, if imagery is used with little planning, it will be more akin to a daydream and less effective. It is helpful to prepare your imagery content by brainstorming...

- **the environment you will expect to encounter.** Consider all the senses that you feel are relevant and a life-like environment. Your imagery environment doesn't need to be perfect, since the real world isn't perfect. For example, if the weather forecast for your dressage competition is rain, imagine riding in the rain. This means the blueprint you create will be more accurate and your confidence in riding in different weather conditions will grow.
- **the responses that you want to experience.** Consider what emotions, physical reactions and actions will be the most helpful to your performance.

Step 3:

Lights, camera, action

The theme and content has been set, and the film producer will be ready for the cameras to roll. Equally, you are now ready to press the play button and experience your imagery movie for the first time.

It's a good idea to close your eyes and find a quiet space when you do this. Spend a few minutes imagining the environment and responses you planned in step two. Create as vivid and life-like an image as possible by noticing the different features of the environment and your reactions, including the sights, sounds, feel, emotions and actions. Afterwards, ask yourself what environment features and responses felt most relevant and vivid. You can adapt your image at any time to make it more lifelike.



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Recalling a time when you have felt confident and performed well, or watching video footage, can help you to brainstorm your imagery content. You might like to note down the key elements of your imagery using the following format, which has examples completed...

Imagery theme

"I want to feel confident about riding into the dressage arena and starting my test. Me and my horse, Mickey, tend to tense up."

	Imagery environment – what can you sense around you? (make this realistic)	Helpful response – what's your ideal emotion, physical reaction or action?
Feel	Feel Mickey go tense underneath me as I enter the indoor arena	Give Mickey a pat, take a deep breath and move into trot to get Mickey going forwards
Smell	Smell the rubber surface of the indoor arena	Relax into the spring and rhythm of Mickey's trot on the surface
Sight	See people in the stands watching	Feel proud that Mickey and I are here competing. Refocus on the rhythm of my trot work
Taste	Dry mouth	Talk to Mickey quietly until my test starts, so I keep breathing
Sounds	Judge rings her bell to start the test	Breathe, sit up, and think 'Straight' as I ride up the centre line

Producing your confidence movie: top tips

- Include within your imagery different senses (for example, sights or sounds) and responses (for example, emotions or actions) that are relevant and helpful to performance.
- Make your imagery as vivid and realistic as possible by considering your camera angle, shoot duration and shoot location.
- Remember that practise makes perfect!



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Web extra

See how Felicity and Jo worked together to develop a more positive plan for competing bit.ly/jodavies-3

Step 4:

Editing

Once you've experienced your imagery movie, consider whether it's as life-like and vivid as it could be. Are you creating as helpful a blueprint as possible?

CAMERA ANGLES

Internal imagery involves riding through your mind's eye. You may see your horse's neck in front of you or focus on the top pole of the fence ahead. Internal imagery may feel most natural and realistic, given that it reflects more closely what you see and experience when riding in real life.

The second perspective is called external imagery and refers to imagining watching yourself ride through a video camera lens. This gives an opportunity to observe technique and form. You might imagine watching yourself ride a dressage test from the judge's perspective. How smooth are your transitions? What overall picture do you and your horse present?

SHOOT DURATION

Given that imagery should be as life-like as possible, it follows that images should be formed in real time. This means that a task should be imaged at the same speed as it takes to complete in real life. However, it may help at first to image performing your chosen skill or action in slow motion. Take time to focus on each important detail. Does this help you to control the image or make it more vivid?

SHOOT LOCATION

Have you ever felt confident of knowing a dressage test, only to find that at the competition the arena seems topsy-turvy?

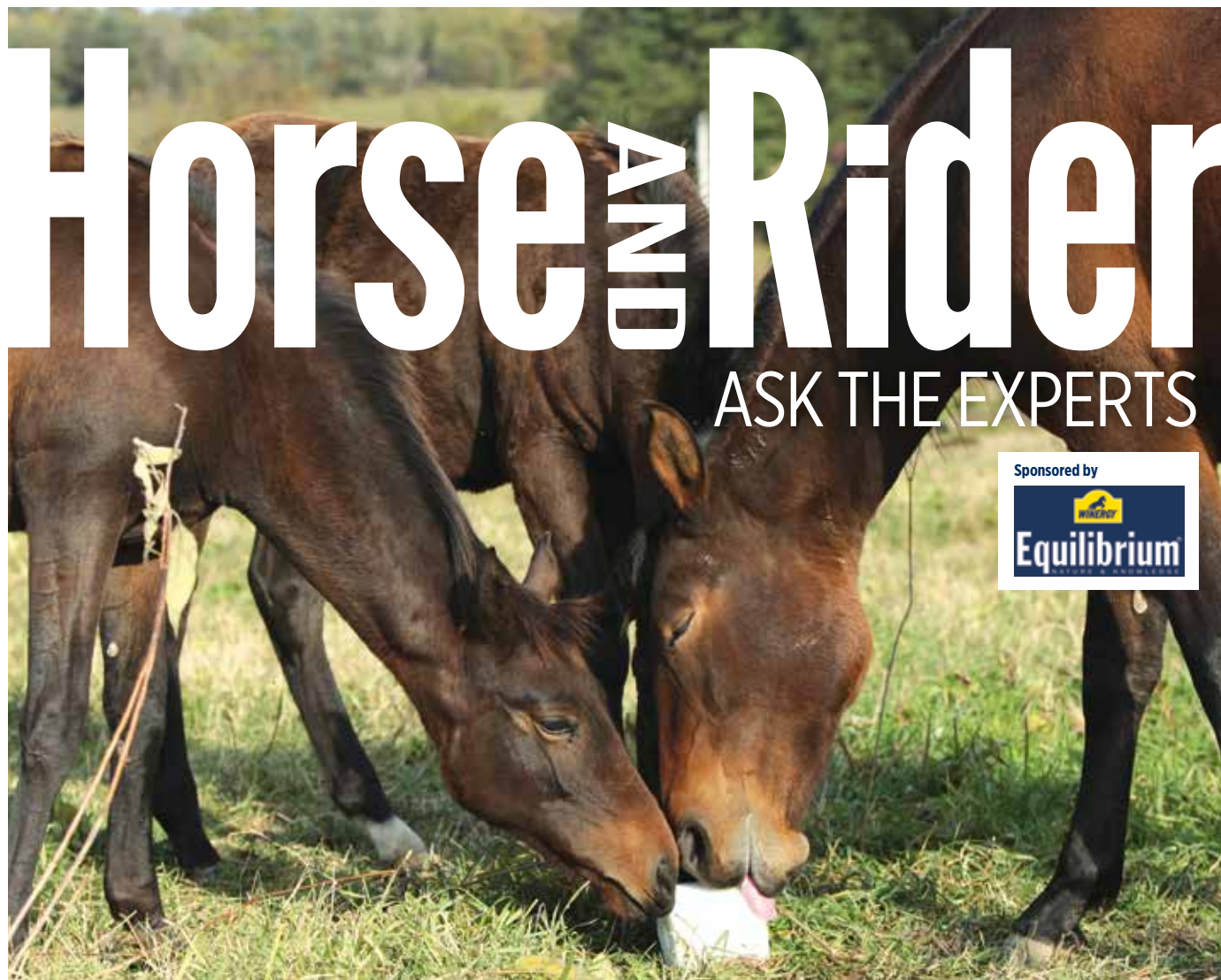
The environment within your image is important, since it directly relates to the accuracy of the blueprint. Take a rider who wants to use imagery to boost her confidence for a dressage test at a new venue. Visual aids could include YouTube videos or asking a friend who has been before to describe the venue. This would

enable her to feel familiar with the venue, despite it being her first visit in reality. Another option would be to visit the dressage arena on the day to observe the environment. She could then take time to run through her imagery, incorporating this new sensory information about the arena she will perform in.

Step 5:

Take 1, Take 2

Just as actors forget their lines from time to time, imagery won't always go exactly to plan. To be helpful, imagery needs to be practised frequently, just like a technical skill. For example, you might decide to imagine jumping a double daily for an intensive two-week period, then use it as a strategy on competition day after walking the course. Seek to set aside some time in your diary to practise using imagery. Just like any other skill, it will take time and practise to perfect! ■



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Sarah Gent BVSc CertEM (IntMed) MRCVS is a partner at Liphook Equine Hospital.



Garry Holter is a pasture management expert and founder of Demeter Grassland Management.



Katie MacAlister BA (Hons) BHS IntSM is proprietor of KJM Equine Behavioural Consultancy.



Dr Rachel Murray MA VetMB MS PhD MRCVS is Senior Orthopaedic Advisor at the Animal Health Trust.



Ollie Pynn BVSc CertEP MRCVS is a partner at veterinary practice Rosdals Veterinary Surgeons.



Anna Pyrah BSc (Hons) is a nutritionist at Dodson & Horrell.



David Rendle BVSc CertEM(IntMed) DipECEIM MRCVS RCVS works at Rainbow Equine Hospital.



Anna Sallet BSc (Hons) MSc is an equine behaviourist and runs Equine Behaviour Solutions.



Victoria Sheehy is a Society of Master Saddlers qualified saddle fitter.



Natalie Waran BSc (Hons), PhD is Professor of Animal Welfare at the Royal (Dick) School, Edinburgh.



Fiona Watkins BSc (Hons) Pro Dip is a qualified independent equine nutritionist.



Claire Williams is Executive Director of the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA).



Perry Wood trains horses and people, combining classical riding with natural horsemanship.

Q&A

MANAGEMENT KNOW-HOW

OUR EXPERTS



Fiona Watkins BSc (Hons), Pro Dip is a qualified independent equine nutritionist.



Anna Pyrah BSc (Hons) is a nutritionist at Dodson & Horrell.



Garry Holter is a pasture management expert and founder of Demeter Grassland Management.

FEEDING TIPS

- Consider adjusting your yard routine – for example, feed while you muck out, then turn out after, so your horse doesn't anticipate being turned out immediately after eating.
- Look for tasty additions to his feed – chopped apple or carrot mixed through the feed can help encourage him to eat.
- He may prefer a softer feed. Try including soaked sugar beet, but remember to add its soaked weight and energy value to your feed calculations.
- If he's turned out alone, feeding him in the field means he can eat in his own time.
- If medication is putting him off his feed, speak to your vet about different formulations or ways to give it without including it in his feed.

First impressions

Q My horse doesn't want to finish his breakfast. He eats half, then waits to be turned out. He isn't a good-doer and is in quite hard work, so how can I make sure he eats all his feed?

A Fiona Watkins answers: Horses are routine-driven and thrive on repetition. It's difficult to say for certain, but I suspect that if your horse's behaviour has been going for any length of time – for example, more than a month – then it has become learnt. In other words, he knows that once he has eaten half his breakfast, he is then turned out. If this is the case, one solution would be to try adjusting his hard feed rations so that you are feeding him a smaller, but more energy-dense meal. Therefore, even though he's eating a smaller amount, he will still receive the nutrients and energy he needs.

A key question is what his breakfast consists of at present. With the exception of forage or fibre, all feed should be given in as many small meals a day as possible, because horses are trickle-feeders. In particular, starch intake (which predominantly comes from cereal-based feeds) per meal should be limited to a maximum of 1g of starch for every 1kg of bodyweight. This means a 500kg horse shouldn't receive more than 500g of starch per feed. The reason for monitoring starch levels so carefully is due to the fact that the activity levels of amylase, the starch-digesting enzyme present in the horse's small intestine, are lower in horses compared to other animals. This means that horses have a finite capacity to digest starch.

As well as the content of his breakfast, I suggest looking at meal size. It could be that his breakfast is simply too much and as such, he simply can't manage to eat it all at once. If you think this may be the case, try splitting it into two or three smaller feeds, so that he is receiving the same volume of feed, but divided up across the day. Is he fed in the evening, too? If not, one simple step would be to split his feed in half and give the balance when he comes in from the field.

Finally, it could also be that he genuinely does not like the taste of his current feed. If he is fed in the



evening, does he eat the whole meal in one go? And is it the same feed as you give him in the morning? If he also leaves some feed in the evenings, then it would point to a genuine dislike of either the texture or the taste of the feed. If this is the case, look for a product with similar nutrient levels and gradually introduce it over five to 10 days to see whether he prefers a different formula or brand.



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"We have all heard of the expression no foot no horse - it is one of those sayings that really rings true. With horses' feet it's not about correcting what you see in front of you (as by then it is probably too late). It is totally about doing all that is humanly possible to make sure that we do all we can right from the beginning. A few years ago I lost a very talented horse due to lack of care of his feet from a young age. On my yard I have a mixture of young barefoot horses and my older shod sport horses. All of the horses are fed PROFEET, their feet are strong and healthy, the shod horses hooves stay in great condition throughout the shoeing cycle and my barefoot horses cope across all the terrains with out any issue at all."

Emma Massingdale

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Nutritious and delicious

Q I've been told that some pasture mixes are not very nutritious, whereas I always thought they mimicked the way a horse would eat in the wild. Can you clarify the situation? I'm confused.

A Anna Pyrah answers:

Wild horses are natural grazers, covering wide areas of grassland with diverse plants. Each of these plants can potentially offer a variety of different nutrients and benefits, depending on the species. Whether you consider a wild or domesticated horse, forage should remain as the primary and key nutritional factor in your horse's diet in order to keep his dentition and digestive system functioning well.

Research shows that seasonal changes play a huge part in the diet of a wild horse – for example, a single species of plant can make up 53% of the total diet at one point in the year, then just 2% of the diet six months later. These seasonal fluctuations can lead to deficiencies and steps are usually taken to fulfil these requirements elsewhere – horses may try to consume clay, soil or bark to compensate.

While a forage-only diet can be adequate for some, an average horse's nutrient requirements are higher than forage alone can provide – this is where a manufactured feed comes into play. Pasture mixes are considered a 'feed' rather than providing a mimic for the natural diet. Pasture mixes are formulated to boost the levels of nutrients and energy to help fulfil the nutritional requirements that a forage-only diet may not meet. Whereas forage should be accessible to graze upon through the day and night, a pasture mix is given in small meal portions as required and consequently takes much less time to consume.

In terms of nutritional quality, the specification of pasture mixes varies widely depending on the company that manufactures it, but it's always best to go for the highest specification you can find. Feeding a quality pasture mix helps compensate for fluctuations in vitamins, minerals and amino acids that occur in your forage throughout the seasons, meaning that you can help to support overall health, hooves, coat, musculature and metabolic processes all year round.

DID YOU KNOW?

One acre is just about adequate for one horse, but only if you also have access to other grazing to allow the plants in your field to recover from the activity of your horse.

Squeeze it in

Q How do I make the most of a small paddock? I have one horse and one acre, and I want to be able to ride my horse on it, too.

A Garry Holter answers:

I'm often asked similar questions and ultimately my answer is the same every time. One acre is just about enough for one horse, but they are highly mobile animals, heavy-footed and destructive to their surroundings, especially where the land is restricted. You also want to school your horse there – I hope you can begin to see the problems you're setting yourself up for. I strongly suggest you sit down and decide what exactly you want for your land and stick to it. This may seem harsh, but trying to do it all, particularly if your land is prone to flooding, lacking drainage or already compacted (a common problem), is a recipe for disaster and one that could cost you a large sum of money to put right.

However, there are options, including fencing off a small area (but it would be very small), creating a track around the perimeter and even subdividing what remains, but ultimately you're always going to be fighting a losing battle. If you're prepared to aerate the land every year, chain harrow at least twice a year and somehow allow it to rest for a few weeks every year, you might get away with your plans, but with the first heavy rains or drought it will collapse like a pack of cards.

I'm sorry to be the bringer of gloom, but it's important not to try to squeeze a quart into a pint pot, especially where the health and wellbeing of your horse is concerned.



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Natalie Waran BSc (Hons), PhD is Professor of Animal Welfare at the Royal (Dick) School, Edinburgh.



Perry Wood trains horses and people, combining classical riding with natural horsemanship.

Through his eyes

Q If horses see in black and white, like I've been told, then why is my horse so scared of yellow objects? He really hates them!

A **Katie MacAlister answers:** Horses' vision is a topic that has been discussed at length by scientists, vets and horse owners for a long time. Vision itself is one of the horse's important senses that contribute towards survival. Horses in the wild are prey animals and they rely on their senses to avoid being captured by other animals. Other senses include smell, touch, taste and hearing. Domesticated horses still rely on their senses, but these horses have to use their senses for other purposes, such as when being ridden.

Horses have evolved to have narrow heads with eyes positioned either side of the head. This means that the horse has peripheral vision and an almost 360° field of

vision. This does mean that horses have a blind spot directly in front of them and directly behind them, which can lead to them becoming startled if a person approaches from one of those areas.

Horses see mainly by monocular vision, meaning that they can see different things out of each eye. They have a camera-type eye, so in order to see, light passes through the lens and reflects the image onto the back of the eye to enable a picture to be formed. The retina is connected to the optic nerve and this sends a signal about the visual environment back to the brain.

Horses can see much better at night in comparison to a human, and they can use this to their advantage when grazing and moving around

at night. It has also been discovered that horses have quite poor perception of depth, which is why some are reluctant to step into puddles and ditches.

Scientists have found that horses can differentiate some colours from grey and these are mainly red and blue. Nevertheless, horses do have difficulty differentiating yellow and green from grey. Light also reflects off bright colours and horses can be known to spook at colours such as yellow due to this. However, it is important to note that horses can also learn to develop spooking behaviour if they are rewarded appropriately – for example, if a rider falls off or releases the contact during or after a spook. This can explain why spooking can become progressively worse.

Like other animals, horses can also suffer from problems with their eyes – for example, cataracts – so if your horse is exhibiting out-of-character behaviour, it's advisable to have him checked by a vet. If the vet gives him the all-clear regarding eye health, then it is worth seeking a behaviour consultant in your area who can assess the problem and develop a training programme to help you.



Photos: Bob Atkins

Hard to handle

Q When my horse hears my trailer he gets so excited he can be hard to handle. How can I calm him down to get him on the trailer quickly and safely?

A Perry Wood answers: Firstly I would remove the idea of doing this quickly, because if you try to rush it will probably take longer. Next it would be good to figure out why he gets excited about your trailer – is his behaviour showing excitement in a positive way or is his energy coming from anxiety? Look objectively at what he's doing, rather than assuming how he feels and giving it an emotional label.

You need to change his pattern of behaviour. First practise leading him well when the trailer is not around. Keep his attention in walk and halt by directing his head to be straight or slightly towards you at all times. The aim is to teach him to stand still and relax, so he can find a calm place when there is no trailer around. When he will lead and stand in that calm oasis, do the same thing with the trailer a few metres away. You will know when you're too close, because his behaviour will change back to how it was before.

Stay just inside his comfort zone in terms of distance from the trailer and do all the same calming things you've already practised. Every few minutes, in a moment of calm, take a break by leading him further away. When you return you may find his comfort zone has expanded, so he is calm a little nearer the trailer.

Don't attempt to achieve this in one session and never work on loading on a day you need to travel. It's important to separate the two things, at least for now. Gradually, by leading well, halting, asking for his attention and placing him in his calm oasis in the halt, he will create a new association with the trailer. Ask a friend to open and close the doors of the trailer noisily while you and your horse practise standing calmly. Showing him that he can be safe and relaxed around the trailer one step at a time, and eventually going in and out of the trailer, will make travel a much more relaxed experience for you both.

TOP TIP

Always wear a hat, gloves and some sturdy shoes when loading your horse. He might not react how you would expect and your safety is paramount.



Pulling your hair out

Q Is pulling my horse's mane cruel? Someone at my yard told me it is, but my horse doesn't seem to mind.

A Natalie Waran answers:

This is a great question – it's one that goes right to the heart of many of things we do with horses so often without questioning what it means for the horse. You need to consider how your horse might feel if his hair was pulled out by its roots. Of course, just as with people, horses find this to be a painful experience and it's clear from their responses that some horses find it far more painful than others. Again, just like us, individual horses have different pain thresholds or tolerances.

The main problem is that there are so many practices based on traditional ways

of doing things with horses, that good owners sometimes forget to stop and question. Horses are extremely tolerant and forgiving of many of the things we expect of them, but responsible owners need to always consider what's in it for the horse and recognise that if a horse is showing fear or pain behavioural responses, then it's up to us to find another way to achieve our desired outcome, or question whether the practice is really that important or necessary.

A similar question has been raised about trimming horse whiskers – a practice that has now been made illegal in some countries, because it has been recognised that taking off these sensory-rich parts of the horse reduces their ability to properly explore their world and reduces their welfare.

DID YOU KNOW?

➤ A mane has many uses – it keeps off rainwater and flies, but for stallions it also gives the neck an extra layer of protection from the bite of a rival

➤ Tail hair that is commonly used in the bows of string instruments tends to come from horses in countries such as Siberia, Mongolia and Canada, because the colder climate means thicker hairs



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Dr Rachel Murray MA VetMB MS PhD MRCVS is Senior Orthopaedic Advisor at the Animal Health Trust.



David Rendle BVSc CertEM(IntMed) DipECEIM MRCVS RCVS works at Rainbow Equine Hospital.

Disappearing act

Q My horse has swellings on the front of his fetlocks, but they go down with work. Should I be worried?

A Rachel Murray answers: Most swellings that go down with work are nothing to be overly worried about, but there's always the chance that they could signal inflammation or poor cardiovascular function, so it's important if you're at all concerned to call your vet out to see your horse.

There could be several causes for swellings that reduce with physical activity. Windgalls are swellings caused by increased fluid in the fetlock joint or the tendon sheath, and tend to be on the back and side of the fetlock region. In a horse with a history of windgalls, once the joint capsule has been stretched, it is likely to stay stretched and will be more likely to collect fluid. If your horse is standing around on a hot day, fluid can collect in this joint capsule, but with exercise this fluid is redistributed and the swelling decreases.

Swelling in the leg outside of the joints can indicate reduced venous or lymphatic return in the leg when your horse is inactive, so exercise helps the fluid travel back up the veins and lymphatics, again causing the swelling to decrease.



Windgalls are swellings caused by increased fluid in the fetlock joint or the tendon sheath



Lucky break

Q My horse has fractured his pedal bone and my vet said we were lucky it wasn't near the joint. My horse is now stuck on two months' box rest and will miss the rest of the show season, so I don't feel particularly lucky – why did my vet say this?

A Rachel Murray answers: Essentially, the prognosis for the majority of horses with fractures that don't involve the joint is better than for those who have joint fractures, so this is why you are lucky – because it could have been a lot worse. A joint is the location where bones connect and these two different parts of bone need to have smooth surfaces in order to cleanly slide over each other when the joint is used. Joint fractures are serious because they cause the joint to become unstable, and the damage the fracture causes to the cartilage and bone is difficult to heal.

Fractures can disrupt the surface of the bone, causing it to have a 'step' in it, rather than being a smooth surface. This means that when the joint is used, the opposite side rubs on the step and wears the cartilage, causing lameness and leading to a high risk of long-term arthritis.

Signs behind

Q I recently heard of a case of hindlimb laminitis – I didn't realise that horses could get it in their back legs and I'm worried I wouldn't be able to identify it. Why do some horses get it in their hindlimbs rather than their forelimbs and how do the signs differ?

A David Rendle answers: Laminitis is the end point of a number of conditions that result in damage to the connections between the hoof and the pedal bone. In very rare cases, laminitis may develop in a single foot, usually because the horse is lame in the other forelimb or hindlimb. However, in the overwhelming majority of cases, laminitis affects all four feet and, in experimental studies, it has been shown that front and hind feet display the same inflammatory changes. The majority of laminitis cases are due to underlying endocrine disease – either EMS (equine metabolic syndrome) or PPID (pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction).

Although all four feet are affected, the signs are invariably more obvious in the front feet. This is assumed to be because the front feet carry more weight than the hinds and there are, therefore, greater forces pulling the hoof and pedal bone apart. The front feet are also subject to greater mechanical forces than the hind feet when the horse moves. The shape of the hind feet may also be a factor with the toes being shorter and the hooves being more upright, so the forces pulling the hoof from the pedal bone are less.

Why some horses are different and develop signs that are

more severe in the hindlimbs is a mystery, but thankfully this is an extremely rare occurrence. When hindlimb laminitis occurs there are invariably signs in the forelimbs as well, so it's unlikely that you will miss the fact that there is something wrong. Any horse who is stiff or lame on all four legs is likely to have laminitis – there are many causes of lameness but very few that cause lameness in all four legs. It's

In the overwhelming majority of cases, laminitis affects all four feet

worth learning how to feel for a digital pulse as this can be a tell-tale sign of disease in the foot.

Horses with laminitis that is more severe in the hindlimbs than the forelimbs do not exhibit the classic rocked-back stance as they do

when forelimb laminitis is more severe. The stance adopted by horses with hindlimb laminitis is variable and unpredictable, but most commonly they tuck their hindlimbs further underneath their hindquarters. A tell-tale sign can be exaggerated and awkward movement of the hindlimbs during walking in a manner similar to stringhalt.

If you are concerned that your horse has foot soreness in one or more feet, or is reluctant to move, then you should always contact your vet for advice. Failure to treat and investigate laminitis promptly is likely to result in a longer recovery time and less chance of a successful outcome.

Did you know?

Pedal bone fractures are caused by excessive impact on the hoof capsule – for example, on a large stone or blunt surface (such as kicking a fence). However, it's often hard to pinpoint the cause of the injury unless it happens while you're riding. X-rays will confirm your vet's diagnosis.



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Victoria Sheehy is a Society of Master Saddlers qualified saddle fitter.



Fiona Watkins BSc (Hons) Pro Dip is a qualified independent equine nutritionist.

Lapping it up

Q How do licks that are designed for different ailments, such as respiratory and mobility problems, work? And what is their benefit over a more traditional supplement?

A **Fiona Watkins answers:** Vitamins and minerals are vital to your horse's physical wellbeing. If he doesn't receive the right amount, it's impossible for him to remain healthy. Horse licks are blends of vitamins and minerals that come in a tub or block and can be placed inside a stable or in your horse's field. Salt (sodium chloride) is usually a key ingredient of horse licks, but they often contain other trace minerals such as copper, selenium, zinc and cobalt.

Licks are produced in a variety of different flavours, such as garlic, mint or apple, and can also be marketed for supporting specific areas of the body, such as joints and the respiratory system. Typically, respiratory-focused licks will contain ingredients such as menthol, eucalyptus and aniseed to help support a clear airway and healthy breathing, as well as additional antioxidants (vitamins C and E). Mobility-focused licks add glucosamine, which helps joint mobility by keeping joints and cartilage lubricated, alongside other ingredients such as MSM, which works in synchrony with glucosamine to help contribute to the overall joint health, and omega oils, which help support and maintain the immune system.

All of these nutrients are consumed at will by the horse when licking, so he self-regulates the amount that he consumes. The principle benefit of these sorts of licks, in comparison to feeding a more



FACT

A study showed that horses' top three favourite flavours are fenugreek, banana and cherry.

traditional liquid or powder-based vitamin and mineral supplement, is that they are targeted to provide the correct nutritional support for specific areas of your horse's body. In addition, they are designed to be extremely palatable and do not need mixing with feed, like a traditional liquid

or powder supplement. While this has some advantages, ensure that you always read the ingredient label carefully because palatability is often achieved by adding molasses (sugar) and this, due to the amounts involved, can undermine any nutritional benefits.

Measure up

Q I need a new girth – the old one has stretched and the stitching is frayed. How do I work out what size to buy?

A Victoria Sheehy answers: Girths are measured from the end of each buckle and sizes go up in intervals of two inches because the girth holes are one inch apart – the two inch increase in girth size allows you to keep the girth on even holes each side. Your new girth should be on the centre hole, as this will allow for your horse to gain or lose weight without the need to replace the girth.

The easiest way to determine what size you need is to measure your old girth, then look at the holes you currently use on your girth straps – from this you should be able to work out whether you need to go up or down in size. Then add or subtract the relevant number of inches from your

Your girth should fasten on the same holes each side and a new girth should be on the centre hole

current girth to ensure the new one fastens on the middle holes.

If you don't have an existing girth to measure, place your saddle on your horse and measure from the middle hole of the girth strap on each side. This will give you the length of girth you need to buy.

Staying dry

Q My Thoroughbred is out 24/7 for the first time and my yard owner suggested I buy him a no-fill turnout for use on cooler, wet nights. What considerations are there?

A Horse&Rider answers: Horses with fine coats often appreciate protection from heavy rain and cooler night-time temperatures, even during the summer months. It's important that you adjust your horse's rugging according to the temperature. Practically, this means you will need to change any rugs you're using in the morning and again at night, unless the weather is really cool.

When choosing a turnout rug, look for one with a high denier. The higher the number, the tighter the weave of the fibres and the more durable it will be. Of course, this

means it will be more expensive, but it's worth investing in the best you can afford.

The choice of fastenings can be bewildering. Surcingle are quick and easy to fasten, but are liable to become caught on branches, whereas leg straps are harder to dislodge, but have the potential to cause rubs if not fitted correctly, and are more fiddly to fasten and unfasten if your horse is fidgety. Most rugs are supplied with a filet string, and these are essential to prevent the rug from blowing up in a gust of wind – a recipe for a spooked horse and trashed rug!

Kitted out

Q My new horse had a hoof abscess while I was on holiday recently. A friend cared for him and he's recovered well, but she suggested I have a poulticing kit on standby in case this happens again.

A Horse&Rider answers: Unfortunately, some horses seem more prone to hoof abscesses than others. While your first aid kit should contain everything you need to deal with one, if you find your horse is susceptible, it makes sense to have a special kit at the ready with everything you need in it, as you can quickly run low on supplies, especially at the weekend when some tack shops are closed.

If you suspect your horse has an abscess,

it's important to call your vet to confirm the diagnosis. He will be able to test for pain using hoof testers and remove the shoe if necessary.

It's important to change the poultice at least twice a day and your vet will advise how long you need to poultice for.

Your poulticing kit essentials...

- Clean tub with lid
- Scissors
- Kettle
- Poultice (pre-shaped is a great idea, but more expensive than a roll)
- Duct tape
- Cohesive bandage (at least a few rolls)
- Disposable padding
- Hoof boots – although not essential, they're a great addition to your kit. They'll keep the poultice clean and in place – apply them over the final layer of duct tape

For a complete guide to applying a poultice, see *Horse&Rider* June 2015 p80.

Top tip

Before starting, set out your poulticing kit. Ask a friend to help by passing you equipment – it'll speed up the process no end!



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Q&A | WORMING

OUR EXPERTS



Sarah Gent BVSC CertEM (Int.Med)
MRCVS is a partner at Liphook Equine Hospital.



Anna Sallet BSc (Hons) MSc is an equine behaviourist and runs Equine Behaviour Solutions.



Claire Williams is Executive Director of the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA).

TRAINING TIPS

- Keep each training session short (no more than five minutes).
- Make sure your horse is calm at each stage before moving on to the next step.
- Have your horse's companion nearby while you are training. This will help to minimise his stress levels, enabling him to learn more easily.
- Keep a written record of each session. Because it's important to progress in very small steps, it's easy to feel that you're not progressing well, but having a record of each small step helps you to see that positive progress is being made.
- If you are unsure of how to work through the process with your horse, enlist help from a local qualified equine behaviourist.

First impressions

Q I wormed my new horse for the first time and he was very resistant. I don't want this to become a problem. How do I get him used to being wormed?

A Anna Sallet answers:

It's fantastic that you're thinking ahead to prevent this from developing into more of a problem. Between now and the next time you worm him, work through a step-by-step training programme to encourage him to be comfortable with the process, rather than to be nervous about it. Initially, it's important to ensure your horse is happy about being touched around his head and muzzle. Start by touching him in the relevant areas of his face with one hand and providing him with a treat from the other so that he learns that being touched in those areas isn't frightening. Increase the length of time that you hold your hand in those areas before providing him with a treat. When he will happily stand still and relaxed with you touching his face, you are ready to move on.

Next hold a clean, empty worming syringe in front of him and, when he looks towards it, praise him verbally and give him a treat. Wait until he shows an interest in the syringe, rather than pushing it towards him. He will start to understand that looking towards the syringe is what gains him a reward, so begin to withhold the praise and reward until he moves his nose towards it. When he touches his nose on the syringe, praise him and provide a treat. Repeat this process so that he understands that by touching the worming syringe with his nose he will gain a reward. The next step is to place yourself where you would normally stand to worm him, with your hand around his nose, then raise the syringe in front of his nose and wait for him to touch it and reward him. Even though it's empty, the bitter taste often remains on the syringe, so fill it with something tasty – apple sauce or puréed carrots are a good option.

Now hold the syringe up to the side of his mouth as if you are going to worm him, but as soon as you do this remove the syringe and give him a treat. Repeat this several times until he is confident. Gradually put the syringe into the corner of his mouth, just a



little bit each time, then remove it and give him a treat. Because the taste of the syringe will now be of something appetising, he will gradually become less nervous about having it put into his mouth. Once he is relaxed about this, you can squirt in a tiny amount of the tasty filling. This may surprise him initially because he isn't expecting it, but repeat the process until he remains relaxed and, once he realises that the taste is pleasant, he will become more confident about the process. Repeat this as often as you can and add different tasty flavours to the syringe so that he learns that it isn't always the same taste that is delivered.

By working through this process gradually, you can encourage him to develop a positive emotional response towards the worming process so that when you do need to worm him, he will be much more relaxed. Between each time that you need to worm him, ensure that from time to time you give him something tasty from an empty worming syringe so that the majority of his experiences with the worming syringe are pleasant.



Spit it out

Q My horse always spits out his wormer – are there other ways I can administer it or ways I can make it more appetising to him?

A Claire Williams answers: Getting your horse to swallow his wormer is a common problem for many horse owners. Some people try to mix a wormer with feed but, unless the manufacturer says that it's okay to do so, this practice is best avoided because it could lead to under-dosing. The active ingredient is a very small percentage of the paste and adding it into a feed could cause some of it to be wasted or refused.

There are worming tablets on the market that you can use to administer a single dose – often one tablet per 100kg of horse. They must be given by hand, but a small amount of feed can be given at the same time to encourage your horse to consume them. Always make sure that they have been eaten and nothing has been spat out. If your horse spits some out, recover any pieces as soon as possible – not only can they be particularly dangerous to dogs, but also because you need to know that the correct dose has been swallowed. Flavourings such as spearmint could also be used to mask the taste, if required.

Always take great care to choose the most appropriate active ingredients for your horse's worming programme, rather than selecting products by only considering the way it can be administered. If you have any concerns, always consult a SQP – a Suitably Qualified Person – who is able to prescribe and sell you equine wormers.

Risks away from home

Q I regularly take my horse to shows and let him graze while he's tied to the lorry. As there have been lots of horses from lots of different yards on the grass, does this increase the likelihood that my horse will pick up worms? And should I be faecal worm egg counting (FWEC) more often to compensate?

A Sarah Gent answers: Grazing on pasture contaminated by faeces of many horses of different ages and unknown worming histories may increase the risk of your horse becoming infected with worms.

The worms of most concern are redworm and tapeworm. Both redworm and tapeworm eggs are not immediately infective to other horses. Tapeworm eggs need to be ingested by small grass mites to complete their life cycle before being

able to reinfect other horses. Redworm eggs normally take at least three days in warm, moist weather to become third stage larvae which are then able to reinfect other horses. In favourable weather conditions, the larvae can survive for up to three months on the pasture, hence very fresh faeces are unlikely to pose much of a risk to your horse. However, faeces that have been present for a few days or months may do.

In horses with increased likelihood of exposure to parasites, such as in your situation, it's recommended to test faeces every two months during the summer grazing season. This can be increased to longer intervals in horses who are managed well and have consistently low egg counts. Your vet can advise if there are circumstances that may increase the need for further FWECs.

Tapeworm eggs need to be ingested by small grass mites to complete their life cycle before being able to reinfect other horses



Did you know?

You can buy a drenching bit, which attaches to a headpiece, allowing you to administer worming paste or liquid medication through the side of the bit.



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Photo: Bob Atkins

Q&A | WORMING

OUR EXPERT



Ollie Pynn BVSc CertEP MRCVS is a partner at veterinary practice Rossdale Veterinary Surgeons.

Long-term considerations

Q The horse I share is up for sale and I am considering buying him, but I'm worried because he had severe encysted redworms as a youngster. How likely is he to have long-term health problems as a result?

A Ollie Pynn answers: Small redworms (cyathostomes) have become an increasing problem to our horses in recent times, primarily because of these worms' increasing resistance to the commonly used wormers.

Intestinal infestation with cyathostome larvae is called larval cyathostomosis. This particularly affects young horses and symptoms include weight loss, diarrhoea, oedema under the abdomen, colic and in severe cases, death. The good news is that if treatment is successful and the horse recovers, then the long-term prognosis is excellent. In some cases, horses remain with slightly loose or pastey faeces. This won't be a problem for your horse, but might just mean that his tail has to be cleaned more frequently.



It's important to remember that the small redworms spend a significant part of their lifecycle in an encysted form, burrowed within the wall of the intestine. It is the mass emergence of these larvae that causes cyathostomosis. Because these are still in the larval stage, they do not produce eggs, so testing of the faeces in the form of a worm egg count will not detect them. For this reason, I always recommend that at least one larvicidal dose of moxidectin be given to horses in the winter to treat any encysted redworm. However, each worming programme should be tailored to your horse and the herd, and this will include regular worm egg counts, careful paddock management and possibly some targeted worming. It's essential that you speak to your veterinary surgeon about worm control, so that your horse can remain healthy, but also to minimise any unnecessary use of wormers, so that drug resistance is kept to a minimum.

MANAGEMENT TOP TIPS

- Removing droppings reduces eggs and infective larvae on the pasture. Daily is best, but weekly is still effective.
- If you harrow your fields, do it when it's warm and dry – this helps kill larvae.
- Overstocking fields makes it more likely that horses will eat contaminated grass.
- Resting fields can help to reduce contamination.
- Before you introduce a new horse, do a worm egg count and blood test for tapeworm, and keep him off the new field for three days after treatment.

Photo: NADIS/David Rendle



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Understanding choke

It can look scary but don't panic – choke in horses is rarely serious and most often it's easily resolved. Vet Imogen Burrows from Cliffe Equine Clinic, a member of XLEquine, explains

A horse with choke can be very frightening to witness. One minute he's munching away quite happily, the next pools of green, slimy muck are covering the floor and walls, and getting everywhere as he waves his head around. Sudden and distressing for the horse, it's no wonder this condition results in understandable anxiety for owners.

The name of the condition is quite misleading, though. Choking immediately conjures up images of someone who has something stuck in their throat. So far, so similar. However, in human terms the blockage is in the trachea (windpipe), so the person experiencing choke is unable to breathe. This is a very important difference. Choke in horses refers to an oesophageal obstruction – a blockage in the gullet taking food to the stomach. While horses can appear distressed, they are able to breathe because the airway remains open.



Objects such as twigs can become lodged in the oesophagus

Our expert



Imogen Burrows
BVetMed CertAVP(EM)
MRCVS qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 2000 and joined Cliffe Equine Clinic, East Sussex, in 2006, where she works as a first opinion and referral equine veterinary surgeon. She obtained the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeon Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice in Equine Medicine last year.

The causes of choke

Generally, choke is caused by a simple obstruction of partially-chewed food that has become lodged along its passage to the stomach. When it is caused by inadequate chewing or a foreign object, for example, it is known as primary choke. In cases of secondary choke, it is caused by an abnormality in the oesophagus which may be compressed, restricting the passage of food and creating an obstruction, or oesophageal function may become impaired so that food does not move down into the stomach, resulting in a blockage.

Causes of choke include...

- Improperly-soaked feed
- Rapid eating (hay or hard feed)
- Inadequate chewing due to dental or neurological problems

- Large treats – for example, apples, carrots and turnips
- Foreign bodies in the oesophagus or under the tongue – for example, twigs, brambles, thorns, pine needles or bedding
- Oesophageal ulceration
- Oesophageal strictures – narrowing of the oesophagus
- Megaoesophagus – a hereditary, chronic dilation of the oesophagus with lack of normal tone
- Oesophageal diverticulum – a pouch in the oesophagus
- External oesophageal compression – for example, a strangles abscess putting pressure on the oesophagus
- Tumours such as squamous cell carcinoma or leiomyoma – a benign tumour





Improperly chewed food is more likely to become stuck

Are some horses more susceptible?

Historically, choke has been thought to be a disease of the greedy pony. Horses who eat rapidly may swallow feed that is improperly-chewed and as around 1ml of saliva is produced with each chew, prematurely-swallowed feed is often drier than normal, making it more likely to get stuck.

However, speedy eating is not the only factor. Horses kept out at grass rarely choke, as the grass is soft, wet and easy to swallow. Any equine receiving supplementary feed is more likely to choke and those fed in a herd are more likely to bolt their feed, increasing their risk.



Horses with dental problems are much more likely to chew less effectively. Pain experienced while chewing will reduce how much a horse chews. There can be a number of causes, including sharp enamel points on the teeth, dental decay, diastemata (spaces between teeth), periodontal disease or jaw arthritis.



Likewise, aged horses may struggle to chew long-fibre foodstuffs effectively, making them more at risk of choking on hay or haylage. Finally, some breeds are predisposed to oesophageal problems. For example, Friesians are prone to a hereditary condition called megaesophagus, which renders them more prone to choke.

What to look out for

Choke has some very typical signs associated with it, making it a relatively easy condition for owners to recognise...

- Excess salivation
- Food return from nose and mouth
- Repeated attempts to swallow
- Retching
- Repeated arching/spasming of neck muscles

- Distress
- Coughing
- Visible/palpable mass on lower left side of the neck
- Dull, depressed demeanour
- Lack of interest in food
- Inability to swallow

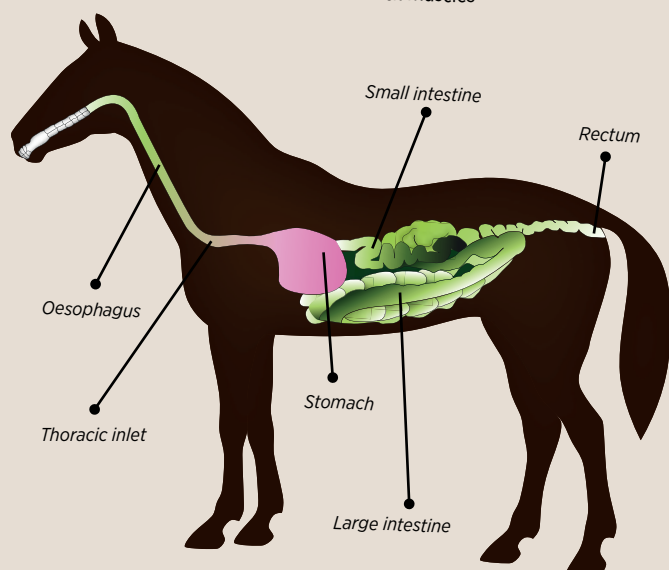
Initially, the horse may appear quite distressed, even appearing to have colic, pawing the ground and sweating. It is common to see retching as the neck muscles spasm, which may be associated with vocalisation – owners commonly describe a 'hippo-like' sound.

The most obvious and typical sign is a profuse, green, slimy fluid that pours from both nostrils and often the mouth. As the horse coughs, often after he attempts to swallow, more of this saliva and food mix is expelled from the nose and mouth. In some cases, particularly where a foreign body is lodged in the oesophagus, signs may be more subtle – saliva drooling from the

mouth may be all you see.

It may be possible to see or feel the obstruction, depending on its location. If the blockage is high up in the oesophagus, it is possible to feel a lump low down on the left side of the neck. However, most obstructions occur within the chest, at the level of the thoracic inlet – a natural restriction formed where the oesophagus passes from the neck into the thorax. Blockages at this level cannot be felt.

Primary choke is the most common form of choke. It is usually associated with feeding, and the signs are acute and dramatic. With secondary choke, the horse may be depressed and quiet rather than distressed, and may attempt to swallow repeatedly. These horses often lose the desire to eat and if they attempt eat or drink, acute signs often occur. Secondary choke may be mild and clear spontaneously, but tends to recur intermittently.



How you can help

The good news is that despite its dramatic appearance, choke often clears within 30 minutes without any veterinary intervention. Although horses will produce a huge amount of saliva while they have choke, it is highly unlikely to result in dehydration unless the choke persists over several hours.

The most important thing to do is to remove any food and water from reach as soon as signs are observed. If you can feel the obstruction and your horse will tolerate it, you can attempt to massage the area gently. Often when horses become more settled they hang their heads. This will help the passing of the blockage, so a low head carriage should be encouraged.



When to call the vet

Generally speaking, if you witness the choke event begin, it is worth allowing some time for the blockage to pass. But if you are unsure of how long your horse has been choking, particularly if there is no supplementary feeding involved or your horse is very distressed, it is important to seek veterinary attention. Acute episodes that have not settled within 30 minutes should also be seen by your vet.

Generally speaking, it is well worth allowing some time for the blockage to pass. But if your horse is very distressed or the blockage has not cleared within 30 minutes, you should call your vet

Veterinary assistance

Your vet will confirm the diagnosis of choke, then start treatment to remove the obstruction. They will usually give your horse sedation, pain relief and muscle relaxants to reduce his distress, lower his head and relax his oesophagus.

The level at which the oesophagus is obstructed is identified by passing a stomach tube up your horse's nose and into the oesophagus. How far the tube can be passed will give your vet an idea of where the blockage is. Small blockages may be cleared by simply pushing the obstruction down into the stomach, but larger, dry obstructions may require careful lavaging. Lavaging involves pumping water into the oesophagus, then draining it out, decreasing the size of the impaction little by little until it is small enough to pass into the stomach. This process is laborious and messy, and may need to be repeated, but it is usually successful. ➤



A stomach tube may be passed into your horse's oesophagus via his nostril

Risks and complications

Horses commonly resent the passage of the stomach tube and if they suddenly move their heads, it can result in a nosebleed. Although the bleeding is unsightly, it is extremely unlikely to cause any problems for the horse.

During lavaging, repeated flushing and movement of the stomach tube is



done carefully and gently to minimise the risk of damaging the oesophagus.

Horses who have been choking for a long time are at risk of aspiration pneumonia if food and saliva are inhaled into the lungs. Horses who might encounter this problem will be given antibiotics to minimise this risk.

If an obstruction has been in place for several hours, your vet may recommend hospitalisation for further treatment, including intravenous fluids to maintain hydration. Further investigation may be necessary if your horse is not responding to treatment as expected or if secondary choke is suspected. This may involve endoscopy (left), where a fibreoptic camera is passed into the oesophagus to see what is causing the obstruction and how best to treat it. Foreign bodies may be removed using this technique or may even need surgical removal.

After the event

Once the obstruction clears, all signs of choke will resolve. Cleaning your horse's muzzle intermittently will help you know whether he is still choking. Often horses will lift their heads and start to show interest in eating again. Although this is encouraging, restrict all food access for a couple of hours. Offer a little bit of water first and if no signs recur, offer some soft grass or very sloppy feed on a little-and-often basis. It is wise to restrict feed for two to three days.

If repeated treatments were needed to clear the choke, your vet may prescribe anti-inflammatory painkillers, but usually medication is not necessary.

Offer small amounts of sloppy feed at first



Will it happen again?

It is certainly worth giving thought to why the choke happened to enable you to formulate a plan to prevent it happening again. Your vet will give you some pointers to help you identify which factors apply to your horse, but here are a couple of suggestions...

● **Eating too fast** This is by far the most common problem. The solution is to slow down the rate of eating. You may think this is easier said than done, but there are some simple tips to help slow the speedy eater...

1 If you're feeding your horse as part of a herd in the field, he may feel threatened and bolt his food to stop the others getting to it. Try taking him away from the group to be fed, so he can relax and take his time.

2 Feeding little and often rather than large meals less frequently can help. Not only is there less feed to cause an obstruction, but horses who are fed regularly will be less hungry

and will be more likely to eat at a sensible pace.

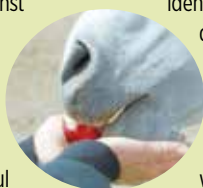
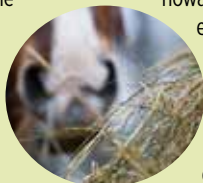
3 Make your horse work for his food. Put a few large objects in the bowl with his feed, such as smooth rocks, mineral licks or toy balls. He will have to push these out of the way in order to get to his feed, which takes time.

4 To slow down hay intake, try double-, or even triple-netting with small-holed haylage nets. Additionally, try hanging the nets in the centre of the stable so he can't push against the wall to get the forage out as easily. This technique has two benefits, both expending more calories to get his forage and slowing the intake speed, so this is especially useful for good-doers.

● **The dry obstruction** Fortunately, this is a less common cause, but it can happen for a few reasons...

1 Consider the type of feed your horse choked on – it is often a combination of nuts, mix and chaff. Dry feed increases the risk of choke, but wetting it is straightforward and, with fibre pellets widely available nowadays, sloppy feed is easy to mix up.

2 Inadequate saliva production will increase the risk of choke. Saliva is only produced when your horse chews, so identifying and addressing dental disorders is vital to ensure your horse can eat comfortably. Routine examination of the mouth along with any necessary dental work should be done every six to 12 months by your vet or a qualified equine dental technician. Also, ensure your horse has access to clean, fresh water at all times.



3 Reduce the likelihood of foreign bodies causing choke. It is worth checking your horse's field, stable and hay for items he could swallow, and removing them as a precaution. We all like to give a treat from time to time, but cut fruit or vegetables into manageable-sized pieces, as these items can be incredibly difficult to remove once stuck. Feeding pieces by hand will ensure your horse has correctly swallowed one treat before he has the next one.

A simple problem

Choke is a relatively common problem that, despite its dramatic presentation, is generally easily treated and carries an excellent prognosis for a full recovery. Simple precautions to reduce the risk of choke are easy to enforce and with careful management, you may find you never see a case. ■



Our expert



Tim Adams BVSc Cert AVP (EM) MRCVS spent two years in mixed practice and six years in equine practice after he graduated. In May 2013, he gained his RCVS certificate in equine medicine and in June 2014, Tim joined the Liphook Equine Hospital.

The lame game

Identifying lameness in horses is an essential skill for horse owners, so arm yourself with expert advice from vet Tim Adams from Liphook Equine Hospital

An episode of lameness is inevitable for nearly every horse, however well looked-after he might be, so awareness of the warning signs will help you help your horse, if and when he becomes lame.

Lameness is defined as an alteration in a horse's gait, usually caused by pain. It can also manifest itself as a change in behaviour or performance.

Identifying lameness is a useful skill for horse owners to have. It can be all-too-obvious with a severe lameness which limb is affected, but with milder cases or lameness affecting more than one limb, identifying it can be challenging, even for an experienced horse person.

Field first

Recognising the signs of lameness can start when your horse is in the field. Lameness as a result of laminitis is often identified when the affected horse is reluctant to move around his field and may be standing in a characteristic stance, with his weight back on his heels.

Other types of lameness can also be seen while your horse is turned out – for example, he may rest the affected limb or may walk up to a gateway when he would normally trot or canter. It's important to be on the look-out on a daily basis for such changes. Damage to fencing, gates or fieldmates can be the first sign that your horse has been injured, so be alert and aware when you go to catch him.

Lameness is defined as an alteration in a horse's gait, usually caused by pain

Standing examination

A lot of information can be gained by carefully examining your horse while he's standing still. It is sensible to start at the bottom and work your way up each leg...

☒ **Hooves** Check for stones in your horse's feet and traumatic injuries to the sole. Then assess the shoe for movement, slippage or pinching. Foot abscesses – an extremely common cause of severe lameness – cause a painful area on the sole, where there may be discolouration and an unpleasant odour or discharge. Hoof testers are useful for identifying foot pain and are used by vets and farriers. A horse with a painful sole will flinch or react when the area affected is tested.

☒ **Digital pulse** Higher up the limb there may be an increased digital pulse – this can be felt using gentle pressure at the back of the pastern and fetlock. An increased digital pulse can be an indicator of inflammation in the foot – which can be seen in many conditions, including laminitis and abscesses.

☒ **Limbs** As you progress up the limb, you may feel swelling in the joints, tendons, ligaments or other soft tissues. Heat may also be felt and is an indicator of inflammation. Traumatic injuries, such as wounds and kicks, during turnout or ridden work are an inevitable cause of lameness in horses and are best seen or felt when he is standing still.

☒ **Back and hindlimbs** Running your hand firmly over your horse's back muscles and hindlimbs sometimes identifies back or muscle pain. Uneven muscling can be an indicator of long-standing back problems or other lameness. It can be helpful when a horse is standing square to look at his hindquarters and hindlimbs, and try to gauge how symmetrical they are.

Checking the digital pulse

A normal digital pulse will be faint and is often barely detectable. An increased one will be stronger, not faster – it's sometimes termed a 'bounding' pulse. Compare all four legs' digital pulses to check if it is stronger in the leg you suspect is lame. ➤



Traditionally in the UK vets have used a 1 in 10 scale to grade lameness, with 1 being almost imperceptible and 10 non-weight bearing, but increasingly a 0–5 scale is used

Severe symptoms

In cases where lameness is so severe that your horse appears unable to bear weight on the limb (known as non-weight bearing) or the lameness is extremely obvious at walk, it is unwise to move him unless it's essential. Not only would forcing movement be painful for him, but it may worsen the lameness. It is more sensible to assess him while standing, so call your vet and keep your horse still and calm until the vet arrives. Potential causes of severe lameness include foot abscesses, joint infections or fractures.

Trotting up

In most cases, it is best to examine a lame horse while he is in action. Alexandre Liautard, the father of the American veterinary profession, wrote in 1888: "An attendant should lead him on in trot, preferably on hard ground, in a straight line, allowing him freedom of his head, so that his movements may all be natural and unconstrained." This is still good advice.

Ideally, trotting up should be done in a quiet area, on a level, non-slip, hard surface in a straight line. The length of a trot-up should be at least 15m and preferably about 25m. The person leading the horse should use a headcollar or bridle and hold his head loosely, so if there is a head nod, it can be seen easily.

There should be space at the end of the trot-up to turn the horse around so that you can see how comfortable he is as he moves around the corner. Assessment should be made in walk initially and then repeated in trot.

Lungeing assessment

Lungeing a horse is another useful way to assess lameness. Like a trot-up, it is best done with two people, so one person can watch as the other lunges the horse. Many veterinary clinics will have two different surfaces for lungeing horses, so

that any difference between a hard and soft surface can be appreciated.

Generally, hard surfaces show up lameness more effectively, especially lameness originating from foot

pain, which is why a pre-purchase exam usually includes this.

Lameness under saddle

There are lameness cases that are so subtle they can only be seen by a bystander or felt during ridden work. Assessing a horse while he's ridden can

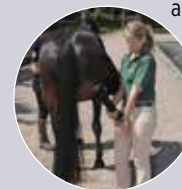
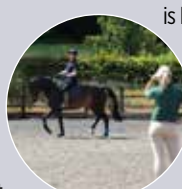
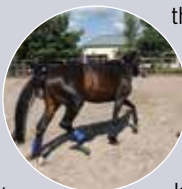
also be useful when looking at gait abnormalities, saddle slip, or problems maintaining the correct diagonal in trot or striking off in canter.

Flexion testing

Vets often use a flexion test, where the horse's limb is held in flexion for a short period, usually 45 seconds to a minute, and the horse is then trotted briskly away. The force that's used during flexion, along with the anatomical structures stressed and the way the leg is held are important considerations when performing a flexion test.

Broadly speaking, flexion tests exacerbate any underlying lameness and this is

particularly true in the hindlimbs. It is possible to flex the lower and upper limb separately, and this can help to localise the site of lameness, however, it cannot reliably localise it to a single joint or soft tissue structure.





Looking for signs of lameness

Forelimbs The most common sign of forelimb lameness is a head nod. The horse's head will nod downwards when the sound limb hits the ground and rise up when the lame limb hits the ground. It is often easier to see the downwards nod on the sound limb, which can create confusion. Think of the horse taking more weight on the sound limb (head nod down) to ease the pain in the lame one and you'll remember it more easily.

When a lame horse is trotting on concrete, the sounds of the hoof fall will be uneven as the horse tries to avoid putting too much weight onto the lame limb. Stride length is also useful in assessing lameness – the lame limb's stride length is generally shorter.

Hindlimbs Lameness in the hindlimbs is always harder to see as there is no helpful head nod. Look at the pelvis as the horse trots away – the side that has the greater range of movement shows the lame limb.

Another clue that gives away hindlimb lameness is the horse's ability to track up – the hind feet should land where the front feet have just left the ground, but in a lame limb this often doesn't happen. Tracking up, stride length and the range of movement in the pelvis are seen more easily on the lunge than on a straight line. Remember that lameness can affect more than one limb. This is common and often makes identifying lameness much harder.

Other clues to discomfort are a dipping back when a rider mounts, and reluctance to be tacked up and girthed – sometimes referred to as being 'cold backed'.

Grading lameness

Lameness is often graded by vets. The reason for this is so they can make a record of the lameness, so that any improvements or deterioration can be noticed. Grading lameness gives a more objective measure of severity, which is useful where multiple people are looking at a horse – for example, different vets or physiotherapists – and also when diagnostic anaesthesia is used. Grading lameness can also be useful when assessing how effective a treatment has been.

Surprisingly, there is no universally accepted method of grading lameness. Traditionally in the UK we have used a 1 in 10 scale, with 1 being almost imperceptible and 10 non-weight bearing, but increasingly a 0–5 scale is used (see below)...

0 Lameness not perceptible under any circumstances.

1 Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent, regardless of circumstances – for example, under saddle, circling, on inclines or a hard surface.

2 Lameness is difficult to observe at a walk or when trotting in a straight line, but is consistently apparent under certain circumstances – for example, weight carrying, circling, on inclines or a hard surface.

3 Lameness is consistently observable at trot under all circumstances.

4 Lameness is obvious at a walk.

5 Lameness produces minimal weight-bearing in motion or at rest, or a complete inability to move.

If your horse is lame in walk or unable to weight bear, or you can see any signs of injury associated with the lameness, such as swelling or a wound, you should call your vet immediately. If the lameness is less severe, a vet visit will be required, but not necessarily an emergency one. ➤

Diagnostic anaesthesia

Where there is lameness and the anatomical site that's affected is not clear after an examination, one of the most common procedures performed by vets is diagnostic anaesthesia. The principle behind this is very simple, but it relies on good anatomical knowledge, a co-operative horse, and clean, sterile techniques and equipment.

It is difficult to sedate a horse before diagnostic anaesthesia, as sedatives can mask lameness, so often nerve blocks and joint blocks are done in unsedated horses. The horse should be trotted up before any block is performed and the lameness graded so improvement can be noticed.

Nerve blocks are performed by injecting local anaesthetic around the nerves supplying a specific area of the limb. After a short period, the area of the limb supplied by the targeted nerve will become numb. If this area contains the anatomical structure causing pain, the lameness will be alleviated and the horse will become sound or significantly less lame.

The standard approach to nerve blocks is to start at the foot and work up the limb towards the shoulder or hip. A lot of lameness is caused by the feet and structures in the lower limbs, so often a horse will only need two or three nerve blocks before he becomes sound and the area causing the lameness is identified.

Joint blocks or intra-articular anaesthesia is a similar technique to a nerve block, in that local anaesthetic is injected into a joint. If the joint is the source of the pain, then in a short period the lameness will be significantly lessened or the horse will become sound.

Joint injections carry a risk of joint infection, which can be extremely serious. Vets performing joint injections should be very careful to clean and prepare the area before injection, and to use sterile equipment and local anaesthetic.

Once the area causing the lameness has been identified, diagnostic imaging techniques, such as X-rays, ultrasound and MRI, can be used in a more targeted and economic way. ■



It's all in the assessment

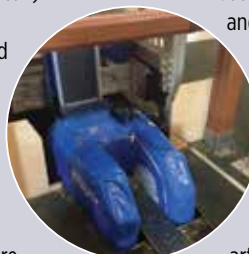
Assessing lameness in horses can be challenging, but the better the lameness is assessed and identified, the more targeted and effective treatment can be.

Diagnostic imaging

Nuclear scintigraphy or bone scans Some horses will not tolerate nerve blocks and joint blocks, particularly young, fractious and nervous horses. In these horses and in challenging lameness examinations, a technique called nuclear scintigraphy (bone scan) is used.

A radioactive isotope is injected into the horse, which concentrates in bones, joints and structures that are inflamed. A scanner that detects radioactivity is then used to identify these areas of inflammation and radioactive isotope uptake. The resulting picture helps vets to know what structures are causing the lameness.

The horse is left radioactive for a few days after the procedure, so care must be taken in handling him, his bedding and his stable. Therefore, he'll have to stay at the veterinary clinic until he is no longer radioactive.



Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

is increasingly available to look carefully at anatomical structures in incredible detail. It shows both bony structures and soft tissue structures in hundreds of levels or sections, so tiny areas of inflammation can be seen. In horses, this is used on the feet and fetlocks. It is expensive and many insurance companies will place some conditions on its use.

X-rays and ultrasound

are more conventional imaging techniques. X-rays show bony structures very well and can be used to identify arthritic conditions, fractures and bone chips, foot balance and laminitis. Ultrasound is useful for assessing soft tissue problems – for example, tendon and ligament injuries and strains. X-ray and ultrasound machines are increasingly portable and sophisticated, allowing good images to be captured more easily than in the past, often instantly.



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It's a wrap

Getting your horse's tail bandage right will ensure he arrives at your destination clean, tidy and rub-free



Top tips

- The tighter you roll your bandage, the easier it is to apply.
- Store your tail bandage inside your tail guard so they're together when you need them.
- Bandage firmly, but not too tight, so that it doesn't slip.



1 Ensure his tail is lying flat and the bandage is dry – if wet, it will shrink as it dries, which could restrict his circulation.



2 Pass the bandage under the tail once.



3 Wrap the roll over the top of the tail, angling it up and keeping the end of the bandage up, out of the way.



4 Fold the end of the bandage down and wrap the roll over the top to secure it firmly in place.



5 Continue down the tail, wrapping with equal pressure and overlapping by 50% of the bandage with each turn.



6 Once you reach the bottom of the dock, start bandaging back up the tail, maintaining the same spacing and pressure.



7 Keep tension on the bandage and cross the tapes over behind the tail, tying them on the front in a double bow.



8 The tail can become wonky while you bandage, so ensure it's sitting straight and follows the curve of his quarters.



9 If you're travelling your horse, a tail guard will help prevent the bandage slipping down and provide extra cushioning.



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Worm control

(for horses great and small)

Horses come in all shapes and sizes and height is not a reliable indicator of a horse's actual weight.

Whether great, or small, it's important to know your horse's correct weight when it comes to accurate worming. This is because under dosing is a significant risk factor in resistance (which reduces the effectiveness of wormers).

Place your horse on a weigh bridge or use a weigh tape to determine its weight. It's a little thing that will make a big difference to ensuring your horse gets the right dose and the full effectiveness of the wormer.

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Having a *field* day

In the wild, horses live happily in herds, but for domesticated equines, this natural lifestyle isn't always possible. So if we turn our horses out alone, how does it affect them and what can we do to improve things? H&R's Lucy Turner investigates



My horses have always been turned out in groups and, other than the odd minor scrape, there has never been a problem. However, it would be fair to say that I've also come across horses who seem to hate the company of others – I've even seen a particularly antisocial horse run through the fencing to get at a horse in the next field.

Being herd animals, I'd assume that living in this way is how horses are happiest, but it's clear that some don't cope with this kind of living arrangement. Why could this be? Is it possible that in the wild they are able to choose who they spend time with, but in a

paddock they are forced to socialise with horses they may not actually like?

Aside from how each individual horse prefers to live, there are also lots of other factors horse owners face that mean their horses have to be turned out alone – for example, livery yard restrictions, if the horse is a stallion, if grazing must be restricted or if the horse is kept alone and there is no company available. But how might this affect horses who crave company and what can we do to make the situation better for them?

I asked various experts in the equestrian world for their opinions and ideas to try to find the answers to my questions.

Life in a herd

So what is it about living in a herd that is so important to horses? Equine behaviourist Anna Salliet explains: "When living in a herd, horses create and maintain close bonds and relationships. In a natural environment, they will travel long distances



with their herd and there is very little fighting among them.

"The term 'dominant' is used freely in the equestrian world to describe individual horses who are believed to be dominant over the other horses in the pasture," she continues. "However, it has long been understood by equine ethologists that in natural environments equine societies are complex in nature and there is evidence to indicate that herds do not have one dominant leader, but instead are a co-operative group of individuals who work together to cope in their environment.

"It's important to remember that all horses are individuals and some will like

each other, others less so," Anna advises. "Horses are known to create the closest bonds with those of a similar size and colour to themselves.

"Horses are social animals who rely on companions for safety. Being prey animals, the more pairs of eyes there are, the more vigilant they can be when it comes to spotting potential danger and if they need to flee, they're safer packed tightly together in a group – those running alone are often singled out as an easy target by predators. Sleeping is a group activity, too. While others sleep, one horse will remain standing to be on the look out for approaching danger." ➤



Going it alone

Having evolved to live in a herd, I wonder how it might affect horses if they find themselves turned out alone. Do they retain a strong instinct to live in groups or, as they are bred as domesticated animals, are they simply used to living in a different way? Anna explains that most of their natural instinct is still intact, so they can be affected by individual turnout: "Because horses rely on their companions for safety, if they don't have any, they are likely to suffer from greatly elevated stress levels."

"Also, when horses don't have companions, it can become difficult for them to gain good-quality sleep, because they always have to keep one eye half open

as no one else is able to do it for them. A lack of good-quality sleep can lead to both physical and mental problems for our horses – we all know how grouchy we can be if we haven't had enough sleep!"



H&R's Charlotte Anderson chooses to turn her gelding, Safiro, out alone: "In an

ideal world, Safiro would be able to live harmoniously with other horses, but in reality I haven't found this to be possible. He's been bitten, leaving a scar on his neck, and kicked – causing him to be lame for six weeks – when turned out in company. I wouldn't risk it happening again in case he was injured more severely next time.

"For me, the negatives of field sharing outweigh the positives. I always make sure he is in a field next to other horses so he is never alone and he can interact with them over the fence, and although it has restricted him from performing some of the natural horse behaviours, he's more relaxed when he's not trying to establish himself in the herd."



Group politics

With living in a herd being the most natural thing for horses, why is it that so many of us have experienced problems with turning horses out in company? Anna Sallet explains that there could be a few reasons: "Most domesticated horses are kept in areas much smaller than would be natural for them and, as a result, some may become defensive over their resources, including food, water and companions. Often resources, such as food, are limited in a domesticated environment, so they become more valuable to some horses because they are unable to



gain free access to them. This can lead to the development of aggression and 'resource guarding'.

"Horses who struggle when turned out with others may have been poorly socialised as youngsters or may have had a bad experience with other horses," explains Anna. "Very often this results in the horse being kept isolated from others, but this is likely to cause further stress and frustration. Careful introduction of horses is essential, and through introducing horses gradually in an appropriate and safe manner, even horses with little social history may be reintegrated into a herd."

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We asked some *Horse&Rider*
readers on Twitter and here's what
they had to say...

@FarAndRide
Love to see ours
out together,
enjoying natural
herd behaviour.

When horses don't have companions, it can be difficult for them to gain good-quality sleep, because they always have to keep one eye open for potential danger



Weighing up the benefits

Livery yard owner Claudine Russell has run yards for seven years. In that time, she has turned horses out both alone and in groups, and has found that there are pros and cons for each.

"Group turnout allows the land to be divided into summer and winter fields, keeping the summer fields nicer and well-maintained, and allowing other fields a good length of time to recover after they have been wrecked during winter! There are also fewer water troughs to clean out and maintain, and having larger fields makes field maintenance such as harrowing and rolling a lot easier.

"Horses turned out in a group are also able to display all of their natural behaviours and a nervous horse may find stability within a group situation. I've found that group turnout is particularly beneficial for youngsters, who will be well socialised and kept in line by older horses, particularly the alpha mares. Older or retired horses may also find more comfort from a group turnout situation, being out with a herd of like-minded horses

"Individual turnout can mean that horses can't display all of their natural behaviours, but in a domestic setting where the horses are of such high importance to their owners, this is not necessarily a bad thing. The only injuries that they come in with are ones that they have inflicted on themselves and as the horses at a livery yard can change regularly, they are not constantly reassessing the herd structure with the inevitable kicks and unrest that occurs.

"When turned out alone, all the horses receive exactly the right amount of hard feed and hay, without the worry that another horse has eaten some of it. It also removes the stress of fighting for feed – I have found that, as a result of individual turnout, some horses start eating more slowly and naturally,



and often aggressive behaviour towards other horses stops completely.

"On a professional yard, safety of both the horses and handlers is paramount, and always being able to select the horse you want and remove it from the field safely is a real plus point. While the maintenance of paddocks is more time consuming, they are subjected to less rigorous use and gateways in particular are less muddy. It also enables field rotation to occur easily, and small areas can be sectioned off for good-doers, while those who need more grass can fill up on the lush areas. While grazing in this way, I have never had to resort to using a grazing muzzle.

"Individual turnout among horses who are regularly out competing does also mean that should the livery yard owner's worst nightmare of an infectious disease arrive at the yard, you have a chance to control the potential spread of it well.

"Currently all my liveries have individual turnout. This means that all my clients have peace of mind, knowing that while they're at work unexpected kicks and bites won't occur, and any rugs or fly masks generally remain put and last for a few years."

@EquiNurive
In herds is best, for sure! Lots of individual turnout stuff happening nowadays though!

@janetllewelyn I sometimes turn mine out in the paddock on her own, but she prefers to share with her buddy. We only turn out two in our paddock, so it's good to know she can go out on her own if one is on box rest.

@TrotUpTweets
My horse got a horrid kick when turned out with other geldings. Individual turnout now for ours.

Sorting the girls from the boys

Turning out horses at stud needs careful consideration, and with entire males and overprotective new mums on site, this is one situation when individual turnout may be essential. Sam Tilley, who has run Star Andalusians PRE stud for 20 years, explains how she manages turnout time for her horses.

"We turn all our breeding mares out together, except when a mare is due to foal, when she will come into the stable at night and go into her own paddock during the day, so we can all keep a close eye on her. Because the mares normally live out together and know each other well, when the foals are born and we turn them back out as a herd, it helps prevent some mares becoming too protective over the foals and kicking each other – they can be very aggressive towards other horses when they have a foal at foot.

With entire males and overprotective new mums on site, a stud is one situation when individual turnout may be essential

"When we wean the foals, they are turned out in a nursery herd and we split the colts and fillies at about a year old – sometimes we put an older mare in with the fillies. The colts run together until they are three years of age and are ready to be backed, so that they can play and grow together, then they are stabled and have to get used to going out in their own paddock. We do this because colts can be very boisterous and playful, and as they can now cover mares, we don't want them too near the mares or fillies.

"Our stallions all have individual turnout and each stallion is different when it comes to the company they need. Our 26-year-old Lengueto V won't tolerate another stallion being turned out near him, however, he has a gelding next to him, and they are best friends and groom each other over the fence. Also, Lengueto is turned out next to the mares and foals, as he is very calm. I couldn't do this with all the stallions, as they would probably go through the fence or pace up and down all day, becoming stressed. The others go into a stallion paddock with high electric fencing. They can see other horses, but they are two paddocks away.

"Many years ago, I turned one of my stallions out with the mares for covering. I was worried about how he would treat them, but he was not the problem – the lead mare wouldn't let him near the herd, kicking him and hen-pecking him. If anyone is considering doing this, my advice would be to do it when one of the mares is in season, so he has a mare to cover straightaway, and proceed with caution – my stallion came back into the stable half the horse he was!" ■

@ask_aunt_annie My ex-racehorse goes out alone.

At university he had a special paddock away from the main turnout area.

@kl_riches I think herd turnout is always best. However, my boy is on his own as we only have him and he's very happy :)



Making the best of the situation

For some of us, turning our horses out in company just isn't possible, whether our horses would like a companion or not. In these circumstances, all we can do is meet their needs as best we can. Here are a few ideas...

- Consider introducing another animal as a companion, such as a goat, sheep or alpaca
- Always ensure another horse is in sight, so your horse doesn't feel completely alone
- Turn your horse out next door to another horse, so that they can scratch and interact over the fence
- Put up a scratch pad so your horse can groom himself on it. You can buy ones specially for the job or make one out of something bristly, such as a doormat
- Try putting equine toys out in his field to keep him occupied
- Ride in company when you can for extra social interaction



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Wound management

It can be frightening when your horse cuts himself, but knowing how to treat his wounds will relieve some of the stress. Charlotte Anderson explores the basics



It's rare to be around horses and never witness some sort of first aid situation. The very nature of animals with metal shoes on the end of powerful, but incredibly delicate legs means that they're capable of inflicting serious damage to themselves and other horses. It's impossible to wrap them in cotton wool, so knowing how to respond when you're faced with a wound is vital.

Assessing the situation

1 – Prevent further injury

Catch him, and calm him and yourself down. If he's able to walk without causing more damage, it's advisable to move him to a stable or enclosed area. Ask someone else to hold him while you inspect his wounds. This is very important because a horse in pain can be unpredictable and your safety is paramount, so don't take chances, stay clear of his legs and keep your focus on him. You need to decide fairly quickly whether you're going to be able to treat the wound yourself or he needs veterinary attention.



When to call the vet

There are a few golden rules about when a vet visit is necessary...

When bone is involved If it's exposed or if the leg looks like the conformation has been altered by the trauma.

Puncture wounds Gaping wounds can look dramatic, but small puncture wounds have the ability to carry infection into the body with little outlet for it to escape.

Wounds affecting the joint capsule, tendon sheath or bursa This is serious because the synovial fluid, which is found in these structures, does not contain any white blood cells which are responsible for fighting infection. If bacteria enters the joint, it can permanently damage the cartilage surfaces. If bacteria colonise the synovial membranes, they cannot be easily removed and the prognosis for recovery is very poor.

Wounds that may require stitching A wound that needs artificial closing (which includes those that are full skin thickness, wide, have a flap of skin, are in an area that is subject to a lot of movement, or are on the eye, nostril or lip) will require clipping and deep cleaning by a vet prior to being sewn or stapled back together. This will reduce the likelihood that an infection is sealed into the wound.

Wounds affecting the eyes Eye injuries always require veterinary attention because of the potential damage to the eye itself and the horse's sight.

Wounds with foreign bodies in If a foreign object remains in a wound – for example, if he got snagged on a tree branch – it will be unable to heal properly and is likely to become infected.

Top tips

- Always have your vet's phone number somewhere prominent at your yard.
- Keep your vet's number stored in your phone in case you have an accident while out hacking.
- Keep salt and a clean, empty screw-top bottle so you can make your own saline solution to clean out cuts. Mix two tablespoons of salt with four-and-a-half litres of freshly boiled, cooled water.

2 – Apply pressure to a large bleed

Make a pad to stem any significant bleeding. Don't use a tourniquet unless specifically instructed to do so by your vet. The amount of blood shouldn't be used to determine the severity of a wound, as not all large wounds are serious and not all small wounds are insignificant.

3 – Consider the significance of the wound

Some types of wound always require veterinary attention. Follow the checklist above to help you decide if your vet is required immediately. If a wound is likely to require stitching, don't delay. Open wounds, especially in environments such as stables, are susceptible to further infection and will require thorough cleaning before they can be closed.

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No pain, no gain

You may have seen people give their horse bute in the event of an injury. Bute is a prescription medicine that should only be used as prescribed by your vet because it reduces pain and inflammation, and can hide serious problems.

Treat the wound yourself at home

If the wound is minor, you can often treat it yourself. It's advisable to wear surgical gloves to reduce the contamination from your own hands. It's often helpful to trim hair away for easier cleaning and dressing.

Clean it

Clean the surrounding area and the wound gently with saline or an antibacterial solution. Make sure you clean away from the centre of the wound to wipe bacteria out, rather than in. A sterile large syringe can be really useful. Use large volumes of saline or wound wash to flush away dirt and debris so the area is clear from visible dirt. Never use wound powders and appropriately dilute antiseptics, as high concentrations can damage skin tissue.



Cover it

Once the wound is clean, the next step is to cover it to minimise further contamination. Apply hydrogel and cover it with a sterile, non-stick wound dressing, then wrap the leg with gamgee before applying a bandage. Bandaging the area will also protect the wound from further abrasion and injury, and encourage it to stop bleeding. It's important that you bandage a pair of legs, even if only one is injured. On large body parts, bandaging isn't an option, so a sealed dressing is a good alternative or a second skin spray.



Check it

Check beneath the bandage twice a day to ensure it's clean, this can be reduced as the wound heals over. Try to avoid disturbing the wound as much as possible.

Not all large wounds are serious and not all small wounds are insignificant

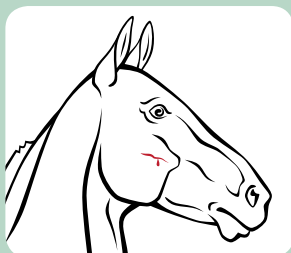
Did you know?

An average-sized 16.2hh will have more than 60 pints of blood, so it's rare for horses to bleed to death from wounds.

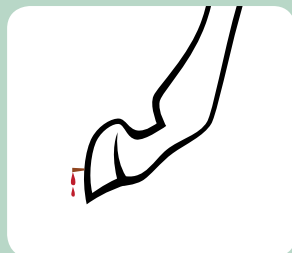
Flesh it out

Proud flesh is excess flesh that develops in a healing wound, caused by excessive tissue granulation. It's common and if it does appear, you may need to seek veterinary advice as it can prevent the wound from healing. ■

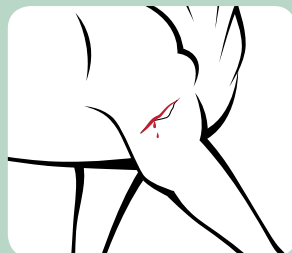
Types of wound



Cut – assess for vet



Puncture – always vet



Laceration – assess for vet



Tear – always vet

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Food *for* thought

If your horse has PPID, formerly known as Cushing's disease, it can be confusing to know what's safe to feed your horse. Senior Nutritionist at Dengie, Katie Williams, sheds some light on the situation

The first thing to explain is why the name has changed. PPID stands for pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction and is a more accurate name for the disease previously known as Cushing's disease.

Cushing's disease occurs in humans and dogs, and affects the pars distalis in the pituitary gland. In equines, the problem is a dysfunction of a different part of the pituitary gland – the pars intermedia.

The pituitary gland is part of the endocrine system and controls other glands in the body, which then communicate with organs using hormone signals in the bloodstream. It also makes several important hormones, including...

- **Growth hormone** – stimulates growth, cell reproduction and regeneration
- **Thyroid-stimulating hormone** – stimulates the thyroid gland to make thyroxine
- **Prolactin** – stimulates milk production
- **Adrenocorticotrophic hormone** – stimulates the production of the stress hormone cortisol

When a horse has PPID, the communication system between the pituitary and other glands goes awry, resulting in an overgrowth of cells in the pars intermedia region of the pituitary gland. The breakdown in communication causes abnormally high levels of the hormones mentioned above. There are some very distinctive symptoms associated with PPID, as well as some more general ones.

Our expert



Katie Williams MSc (Dist), R Nutr is the Senior Nutritionist at Dengie. She gained a BSc and MSc in Equine Science from Writtle College. Katie heads a team of nutritionists, and is responsible for developing all new feeds and ensuring that existing products comply with feed safety rules and regulations.



Clinical signs of PPID

- Long, sometimes curly coat – probably the most distinctive symptom of PPID
- Failure to fully shed coat
- Chronic infections
- Hoof abscesses
- Excessive or inappropriate sweating
- Increased water intake and urination
- Lethargy
- Loss of muscle mass
- Pot-bellied appearance
- Infertility, lack of oestrous cycles and abnormal mammary gland function
- A predisposition to laminitis (when levels of insulin in the blood are high)



The high insulin level in the blood is why, historically, the condition now referred to as equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) has been referred to as peripheral Cushing's. The more accurate name and definition of EMS has now been established and is distinct from PPID. However, it has been suggested that horses with EMS could be predisposed to PPID later in life.

Diet decisions

Because of the increased risk of laminitis, the most important feature of a diet for horses with PPID is that it's low in starch and sugar. The greatest source of sugar is usually grass, so restricting intake might be necessary – this can be achieved using a grazing muzzle. It could be necessary to stable your horse, although this might not be ideal for older horses whose joints would benefit from moving around. Using electric fencing to section off a small area in the field is an option, particularly because it might mean they can see and interact with other horses and ponies, too.

Grass-based forages also contain sugar and, because sugar is water-soluble, soaking the forage will help to reduce sugar intake to some degree. Haylage should normally have a lower sugar content, however, often haylage has a higher percentage of dry matter than it should, in which case it needs to be soaked to reduce the sugar content to make it suitable for a horse with PPID.

For PPID cases who are underweight, highly digestible fibre sources such as alfalfa and sugar beet pulp are ideal for promoting safe weight gain. Both are low in starch and sugar if you feed a molasses-free version, but they still provide energy levels equivalent to a high-fibre mix at about 10MJ/kg DE (digestible energy).

For poor-doers, the addition of oil to the ration provides energy in a safe form, too. Feeds that combine alfalfa and oil contain the same energy value as a conditioning mix, at 12.5MJ/kg DE, but with about 10 times less starch – 2% compared with 20–25%. ➤

Low in sugar

The name sugar beet can be a bit confusing because it implies it wouldn't be a low-sugar feedstuff. However, the product that is used for horse feed is the fibrous residue that's left over once the sugar has been extracted for use in the human food industry. As long as molasses isn't added back in, sugar beet pulp contains less than 5% sugar, so is actually a very low-sugar feed and ideal for those prone to laminitis.

At the other end of the spectrum, straw can be used to provide a low-sugar and starch source of fibre that is also low-calorie, making it ideal for good-doers who need fibre to maintain normal gut function without too many calories. However, feeding straw as the sole forage source is associated with the development of gastric ulcers, so it's preferable to mix straw with hay to dilute the calorie intake. As with all new feeds, introduce straw gradually and note that it isn't suitable for horses with compromised dentition.

The greatest source of sugar is usually grass, so restricting intake might be necessary



Fibre facts and figures

- Research suggests that muzzles can reduce grass intake by about 75%.
- Soaking hay for 16 hours results in the greatest reduction in sugar, but this might not be practical for everyone to do, so soaking for as long as you can should help to reduce the sugar content.



Balancing act

A balanced diet is important for all horses but, because PPID seems to affect the immune system, it is even more important to ensure all the essential vitamins and minerals a horse requires are provided. Feeding a higher-specification product rather than a basic maintenance ration might be beneficial – look for products designed for older horses or performance horses because they should contain more than those for leisure horses.

A supplement or balancer can be fed with a small amount (250–500g) of a low-calorie, chopped fibre feed to those who are overweight. Replace the low-calorie fibre feed with one that combines alfalfa and oil if extra energy is required for work or weight gain. Mixes and cubes should be avoided, or used with care, because of the higher levels of starch they contain, which is not ideal for those at risk of laminitis.





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If your horse is still active, an electrolyte supplement might help him to find the work easier

Tempting fussy feeders

One of the most frequently asked questions about PPID is how to deal with fussy feeders, which can be especially difficult when trying to keep sugar intake as low as possible. Trying feeds with different flavours such as apple or garlic can help to get horses eating again and can also be useful for hiding medication. There doesn't seem to be one particular flavour that appeals to all PPID cases, so unfortunately, it can be a case of trial and error in finding the flavour that appeals to your horse.

Treats can be a contentious issue, too. Most things in moderation are not going to cause problems because they are usually a tiny proportion of the total diet, but there are low-sugar options available that are usually based on herbs. It's always worth checking that the herbs used are suitable for PPID cases and reputable manufacturers should be able to advise you on this.

Added extras

The thick-coat characteristic of PPID can mean that horses and ponies get very hot, so clipping all year round might be necessary to help keep your horse as comfortable as possible. Even clipped horses can sweat more than normal and, because electrolytes are lost in the sweat, it is a good idea to replace them by using an electrolyte supplement. Excessive losses can result in the early onset of fatigue when working, so

if your horse is still active, an electrolyte supplement might help him to find the work easier.

Vitex agnus-castus, also known as chasteberry, is commonly included in supplements marketed for those with PPID because the active compounds are thought to affect the pituitary gland, although there has been no published research on equines. The Laminitis Trust carried out some research using *Vitex agnus-castus* and reported improvements in a number of the horses in the trial. Their behaviour, coat shedding and excessive drinking improved, but some still had episodes of laminitis. Like several herbs and plants used for many years,

Vitex agnus-castus is a source of antioxidants, so it might be of general benefit to the immune system.



Vitex agnus-castus
or chasteberry

Future planning

With an ageing equine population, PPID is being diagnosed more frequently.

This will undoubtedly result in more research being carried out to improve treatments and advise on best management practices.

The effect of PPID on the immune system and, in particular, the negative impact this has on safely administering vaccinations is an area that is being researched in the United States. It is also likely that further work will try to determine whether there is a link between EMS and PPID, but this is likely to take several years. ■



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Retirement plans

We all hope our horses will go on forever, but in reality some will have to retire or reduce their workload. Charlotte Anderson explores the options

Ageing. It's happening to us all whether we like it or not and it affects us all in different ways. The same is true of our horses. The length of your horse's ridden career can be affected by many things, including...

- workload and type of work
- weight
- genetics
- nutrition
- injuries
- conformation
- living conditions

Developments in nutrition and medical discoveries mean that good health can be maintained for longer and the effects of debilitating conditions can often be lessened. This means our equine friends have the potential to be ridden for longer than in the past, so more of us have elderly horses in our charge.

Time to retire?

It's not just age that forces retirement, injuries and degenerative conditions are common causes, too. No matter your horse's age, if he's been diagnosed with a degenerative condition, such as arthritis, it's extra important to be on the look-out for any changes in his demeanour and body condition. You can then reduce his workload to a level that means you're not speeding up the wear and tear on his body. Signs that age is starting to take its toll include...

- difficulty maintaining weight
- dry or mucus-coated manure
- dull or dry coat, despite regular grooming sessions
- trouble eating – for example, dropping food when he chews

If your horse has any of these symptoms, you should discuss them with your vet.

Just how old is too old?

The truth is, there isn't a standard age for retirement. Just because your horse has reached his late teens or early twenties, it doesn't mean you can't continue to enjoy riding him. It's not uncommon for horses to be ridden well into their twenties or even longer.

Rosie and Barry's Best



Rosie had a glittering event career with Barry's Best and decided to end his career on a high rather than risk injuring him competing at the top level in his senior years.

"Barry's Best (Baz) was sent to me to be backed as a five-year-old. I later bought him after I had started competing him at BE100. We completed 10 four-star events – Badminton four times, Burghley five times and once at Luhmühlen. Our highest placing was at Burghley, where we finished ninth.

"I would have loved to ride Baz at Badminton for a fifth time, but sadly it wasn't meant to be. The event was cancelled in 2012 and the following year he was 21 and it seemed like the right time to retire him from the top level. He owes me nothing and has been a totally

amazing horse, giving me so much fun and experience – I could not have asked for a better partner.

"Baz hasn't retired completely, though. He simply would not have coped and would be very unhappy. He loves to please and thrives in the competition environment, so he is now enjoying eventing at a lower level with young rider Suzy Watts. He's still fit and sound and he really doesn't look 21, or feel it! Suzy keeps her other horses with me, so Baz has continued with the same routine, which works as I would never have let him leave my yard.

Did you know?

The world record for the oldest racehorse to win on the flat is 19 years. Al Jabal, a pure-bred Arab, won over six furlongs in 2002 in the UK. The chestnut gelding was born on 5 April 1983.

**Did you know?**

After contracting a blood and bone infection, the prolific racehorse, Denman, retired from a glittering career aged 11. He now hunts with the Blackmore and Sparkford Vale.

*Rodger and Angel*

Rodger bought four-year-old ex-racehorse, Angel, for his daughter, Victoria. Sadly, a serious spine problem ended Angel's ridden career while she was still young and she now lives in a retirement herd in Kent.

"Angel had raced as a two-year-old,

but despite starting well she finished poorly and never won a race. Angel was a challenge and it wasn't long before Victoria noticed something was wrong. Sadly, examinations revealed eight fused vertebrae. By then, Angel had worked her way into our hearts and we decided to keep her, but retire her completely.

"She has a lovely, gentle nature and because she was still so young, we felt Angel would be best suited to a herd environment. We relocated her to Worsenden Farm in Biddenden where she now lives with approximately 35 retired horses, spread across different fields in small herds. Where once she was

nervous and bullied by other horses, she is now so relaxed.

"She is a sociable horse and it has been lovely to watch her happily mixing with the herd. During the winter, they come into a large barn, but they live out for the rest of the year. She is cared-for on a daily basis by staff who treat the horses like their own, which means we are free to visit when we want to without the commitment of daily care.

"Angel is still young and her back will continue to deteriorate, so what the future holds for her is uncertain. For the time being, however, she is very happy and so are we."



"Suzy trains with me and her mum, Nicky, is very supportive, helping to exercise Baz when Suzy is at school. My family and I love to see how well they get on together. Baz looks after Suzy and Suzy looks after Baz.

"Baz will continue as he is with Suzy, but if there are signs of him wanting an easier time, we will have to think again. At present, however, he's looking, feeling and going as well as ever, and I think he is trying to tell me he should be going to Burghley. After all, age is only a number and he doesn't know that he's a little bit long in the tooth."

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Debbie and Millie



Debbie bought Thoroughbred x Cleveland Bay mare, Millie, as a six-year-old and the pair have enjoyed a long and happy ridden partnership spanning 26 years. When injury ended Millie's ridden career, Debbie knew she'd never part with her friend.

"Millie is my first and only horse. We've competed in local shows and sponsored rides, but mainly enjoyed hacking out in the forest.

"Over the years, I have very rarely had to call the vet, but in 2012, when Millie was 29, she came down with colic. After having a seven-metre long piece of intestine removed, Millie made a good recovery, but the long period of box rest had weakened her ageing muscles. Unfortunately, this resulted in her not being as steady on her feet as she had previously been and on a routine walk around the orchards, Millie suddenly became very lame. Investigations revealed that she had ruptured a suspensory ligament.

"I knew then that it was time to retire her. For me, money wasn't a deciding factor in whether I would have Millie put to sleep. She has been my best friend for 26 years and so long as she can be kept pain-free, I feel I owe her a happy retirement. I can't afford another horse while Millie is around and I know some people will think it's crazy to keep a horse I can't ride, but owning Millie was never just about the riding – it's the relationship we've built over the last 26 years. I could have moved her somewhere cheaper, but I don't think she would cope well with the stress of moving.

"As long as she is happy, content and pain-free, then I'm just pleased to have her around."

Exercising the elderly

'If you don't use it, you'll lose it' is a good way of looking at equine fitness. Keeping your senior horse moving is vital to retaining his mobility, but there are extra considerations with the elderly equine.

Reduce his workload gradually – for example, the frequency of competing, the height of the jumps, or the length of each riding session – to establish what he can tolerate, but remember that this will be constantly evolving. Don't make changes too quickly. Make an adjustment and see if it has an effect, but don't make more than one change per fortnight or establishing what has caused the change will be very difficult to distinguish.

Ride little and often rather than a couple of long rides a week, and avoid long sessions to help keep him supple and sweet. Let him enjoy his work by varying it to include less physically demanding pursuits. He might not be able to jump five-bar gates anymore, but he might be able to manage short hacks and low-level Trec.

Keep a close eye on his condition and weight, as these things will affect how his saddle fits which, if left unchecked, could cause more problems. If he's finding even a reduced workload hard, it's essential to speak to your vet to discuss the best way to progress.

Daily turnout is essential to keep him mobile, reduce stiffness and keep his gut in good health. It's not unusual for horses who have had busy lives to become depressed once they're no longer working and this is something you'll need to consider.

Keeping weight on older horses can be a real challenge and it's possible you'll need to alter his management to allow for that. Choosing calorie-dense feed is a better idea than simply increasing his portion size and is also better for his digestion. Adding oil to his diet and choosing a feed that's designed for veterans is a good idea. If you're unsure what to feed, speak to a qualified nutritionist who will be able to advise you.



Top tip

His changing workload will have an effect on the way his saddle fits and it's important to have it checked if you're continuing to ride him.

Early retirement

Injury is probably the biggest cause of early retirement. If your horse is young, this can mean a very long retirement and, as an owner, the cost implications of this can be overwhelming. When serious, long-term injury strikes, owners are often left with no option but to stop riding.

Signs that your horse is finding his workload difficult include...

- Stiffness overnight in the stable
- Resistance to aids
- Reluctance to pick up his feet for the farrier
- Change in behaviour when being ridden
- Lack-lustre in both appearance and character



Charity case

It's a sad reality that because there are so many abandoned and mistreated horses, very few charities are able to take in retired horses. There's just too much demand and not enough space for them all.



Weighing up the options

There are many different ways to manage a horse who needs a reduced workload or to retire completely.

Ridden retirement – tailor your ridden aspirations to fit his capabilities, or find someone who suits his slower life better by loaning or sharing him. It's important to pick a loan home carefully and ensure that the new carer is aware of his capabilities and limitations, and loaning rather than selling will give you more control over his future. Don't be tempted just to pass the problem on to someone else. If he requires veterinary treatment that isn't covered under an insurance policy, you have an obligation to inform anyone considering taking him on, and it's not unusual for owners to continue to pay for the veterinary treatment for horses they loan out.

Companion – If he's pain-free and has a quiet nature, you may be lucky enough to find someone who needs a companion horse. Ensure they're able to meet his needs and visit the home before agreeing anything. The arrangements regarding who will pay for what should be agreed in advance.

Retirement livery – This is increasingly popular, but quality varies enormously from one yard to the next, so it's important to research your options. However, it can be a good way to reduce your costs because most centres don't have the same facilities you'd expect on a normal livery yard, such as an arena, and are, therefore, cheaper.

Expect your horse to be unshod, (especially behind) and living in a herd of five to 20 horses, so if he has very specific veterinary requirements or is aggressive towards other horses, this may not be suitable for him.

Sarah and Potty



Sarah, an event rider from East Sussex, found Just-a-Token, her one-star event horse a new job when injury forced her to retire.

"I've owned Just-a-Token, affectionately known as Potty, for nine years. She was an incredible eventer and took me from BE100 to CCI* in one season – an incredible achievement for us both. At

15.3hh, she's only a small mare, but she's bold and scopey.

"Unfortunately, when she was 16, Potty suffered a recurring dislocation of the hindleg, although never while she was being ridden. She was treated for the problem, but when I brought her back into work, I felt she wasn't quite right. By this time she was 17 and I was torn about what to do. Potty had done so much for me and I owed her a future, but as a quirky competition horse I knew she wasn't suited to field retirement. She would have hated it. To be left out of the usual routine of the yard wouldn't have done her justice.

"I discussed Potty's options with the vet. He assured me that her hindleg problem was not hereditary or a result of poor conformation so I decided to put her into foal – that way she still had a job, was earning her keep and we would be getting something out of it. Potty's

routine has remained the same, so she still feels like she's an integral part of the yard, which means she has her mane trimmed and her hooves oiled the same amount as before she was injured.

"I've bred two foals from Potty, both from stallions with calm natures to try to balance out her quirks. She's produced a lovely three-year-old, Lily, and three-month-old Wally, our latest addition to the family.

"Putting a mare in foal certainly isn't a cheap way to get your next horse. It comes with its own complications and risks, and I wouldn't recommend breeding from a horse for sentimental reasons. I would have preferred to have her euthanased if she couldn't do a job – for her sake, not mine. Fortunately, I've found something that allows her to enjoy her retirement and seeing her offspring develop gives me tremendous gratitude to my incredible mare."

Worst case scenario

If, for any reason, you can't look after your ageing equine, consider euthanasia as a viable alternative to settling for an unknown future. Passing your horse on to someone else in the hope that they'll care for him when you can't is risky. He may find a fantastic home, but could also go on to be ridden when he shouldn't be, or passed from pillar to post, with any treatment required falling by the wayside. It's not nice to consider ending your treasured friend's life, but in some circumstances, it's the kindest thing. ■

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Wellbeing news

{ NEWS SPECIAL }

Getting the best advice

As a horse owner, it's important to protect your horse from potential threats to his health, but where do you start? It's a complete minefield and leaves horse owners with a lot of responsibility. If you had any questions about how to keep your horse in the best of health, where would you turn for advice?

MSD Animal Health conducted a survey to find out where owners go for advice on preventative healthcare. The results were...

62% vet

12% friends

10% internet forums

10% yard owner/manager

3% farrier

3% physiotherapist/back person

With vets being the experts on equine health, the good news is that this is where most horse owners get their advice on preventative healthcare and 94% of those believe either that their vet is the most knowledgeable on the subject or that their vet is friendly and understands the needs of their horse.

However, the results showed that 1 in 10 seek advice from internet forums, with 10% of those admitting that they do this because the advice is free and 8% believing that internet forums are the most knowledgeable on the subject. While it is acknowledged that forums are an excellent medium for horse owners to discuss and share their experiences, taking advice from them is relatively risky.

Yard owners were also a popular source of information, and the main reasons were that owners felt they are friendly and understand the needs of their horse, they are on the yard regularly so it's convenient



and they are the most knowledgeable on the subject. It's encouraging that the advice of yard owners is highly valued and some yards really embrace the concept of preventative healthcare to ensure the horses remain happy and healthy.

So with vets being the best source of information, why is it that 38% of horse owners don't go to their vets for advice about preventative healthcare? The top three reasons were that respondents felt that their vet would insist on a visit and examination, that they were worried about wasting their vet's time and that they might be charged for the advice.

However, in most instances, vets are happy to offer initial advice free of charge, and will only insist on visiting and conducting an examination if they think that the animal is in real need of treatment. If you're worried about your horse or how to keep him healthy, don't hesitate to contact your vet – they're the best person to talk to and will be happy to talk to you about your concerns over the phone.

{ STUDY }

Share your knowledge

Horse owners and carers play a key role in the health of their horses and often have an in-depth understanding of their animals. By listening to owners' views and experiences of equine health and disease, vets are in a better position to provide practical advice for specific issues, and this could improve communication of veterinary information.

“By listening to owners' views and experiences, vets are in a better position to provide practical advice”

Researchers and veterinary clinicians from the University of Liverpool are developing a research programme exploring horse owners' understanding and experiences of equine health. The study is being supported by the Animal Welfare Foundation, part of the British Veterinary Association.

The study team is looking for horse owners to take part in a questionnaire and would like to hear from a wide range of people involved in caring for horses – even if their horse has never been unwell. All responses will remain anonymous. If you'd like to find out more or take part, please visit liv.ac.uk/equine/owners/horsehealthstudy. Alternatively, to request a postal questionnaire, email horsehealth@liverpool.ac.uk or text 07501 833178.

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Saving Cally

Offering a home to a horse who has had a difficult start in life can be hugely rewarding, but comes with plenty of challenges, as Penny Paddle found out



Cally on arrival from Portugal

After another long, hard winter of mud, rain and aches and pains, I decided it was time to give up riding. My lovely, but very opinionated mare, Monica, would have to go out on loan and I planned to focus instead on supporting my daughter. She and her friends all own Lusitanos, and the highlight of the Iberian horse calendar is the Lusitano Breed Show. Now horseless, I agreed to tag along.

It was my first time at an Iberian show and I was blown away by it. I thoroughly caught the Iberian bug. Part of me really wanted one of these beautiful, versatile horses of my own, but I was supposed to be downsizing. Nevertheless, I began to trawl the internet for an Iberian horse of my own. Horses streamed across my laptop screen and, eventually, through Facebook, I saw a beautiful buckskin Iberian mare for sale. She was seven years old, and had been rescued from slaughter and imported from Portugal by a lady in Hampshire. After four-and-a-half months being lovingly nursed back to health, the mare had put on lots of weight, although she hadn't been ridden and no one even knew if she was broken in. But her new owner's personal circumstances had changed and she could no longer keep her. Her beautiful, brown, soulful eyes touched my heart and I really wanted to give her a second chance. Based on a couple of photographs and a two-second clip of her trotting in the field, I emailed back and said that I wanted her.



British Dressage (BD)

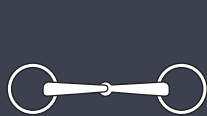


Most organisations follow the BD rules for approved dressage bits. The regulations are very similar to the FEI rules, specifically so that competitors can adhere to one set of rules whether they're competing in the UK or in Europe. To compete in a British Dressage test, a bridle with a bit is compulsory and it must be used in the conventionally accepted manner (the reins must attach to the bit and loop over your horse's neck). It's

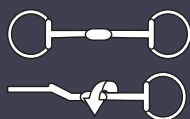
possible to use a Micklem bridle with a snaffle, but the bit cannot be attached with bit-clips. Bitless bridles or hackamores are not permitted at any level.

Tests ridden at Elementary level and above can be ridden in either a standard snaffle or double bridle, Prix St Georges or Grand Prix tests ridden under FEI rules must be ridden in double bridles. Bit guards are not allowed at any level in BD competitions. ➔

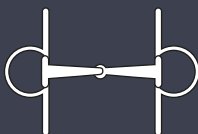
Only the following snaffle bits are permitted



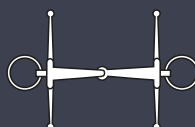
Loose ring



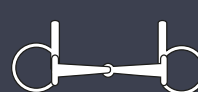
Rotating mouthpiece



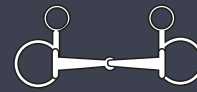
Eggbutt with fixed full cheeks



Loose-ring full-cheek (Fulmer). Fulmer keepers are permitted



Upper cheeks only



Hanging cheeks



Egg-butt



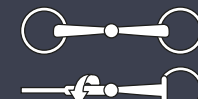
D-ring



Straight bar – must be straight and have no ports or raised bumps



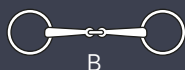
Rotating middle piece



Rotary bit with rotating middle piece



A



B



C

Jointed mouthpiece with rounded middle piece (a,b,c)



Cally was so nervous of strangers. She stood in front of us, shaking with fear



Cally's mane just trimmed

The arrival

It was a long drive from Cornwall, and my daughter Poppy and I were exhausted when we finally reached the field where the mare was kept. We waited patiently by the gate while her owner went to collect her. When they brought her out, they told us not to touch her, because she was still very nervous of strangers. As she stood in front of us, she shook with fear. It was heartbreaking.

When the time came to load her, she clearly didn't want to leave the only people she had grown to trust. But, with some gentle handling and soothing words, we managed to persuade her into the lorry and carefully headed out onto the motorway. The long journey gave us time to think of a name for our new charge and we decided to call her Cally. To my relief, she stood quietly in the back all the way home.

After stretching her legs, Cally stood quietly as we washed her down with the hose, where she had sweated up badly in the lorry. We put her in a stable with a small feed to keep her occupied. So far, so good. We put Poppy's Lusitano gelding, Almansor, in the stable next door to keep her company overnight. I went to bed feeling as though we'd achieved a lot, but the journey was only just beginning.

On day two, we turned Cally out with Almansor. Both horses remained calm, so when it was time to bring her in, we decided to take Cally into the manège

and play some friendly games with her. It went smoothly, so we decided to try putting tack on her. Cally surprised us again – she didn't seem at all fazed by it. Maybe she had been backed after all?

We carried on with the same routine for the rest of Cally's first week with us and she seemed to cope well. By the end of the week, Poppy could lean over and put weight on the saddle. Cally didn't flinch. Over the next few days we built it up and soon Poppy was sitting astride Cally with no problems. We were thrilled. But, as it turned out, Cally wasn't.

The next day, our easy-to-catch mare declined to be caught at tea time. After five hours and with the moon rising, I admitted defeat. I also realised that we had got it very, very wrong. Cally is a survivor. She coped with us riding her. She survived. But she wasn't comfortable with it. We had effectively stolen a ride from her – we'd gone too fast and got carried away. Now we would have to start all over again to win her trust and it was going to be a long, slow process. I was gutted.

Winning Cally's trust

In the weeks that followed, I spent a lot of time sitting in the sunshine, in the field, with Cally. ➤



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Backing Cally... for the second time!

Eventually, she allowed me to stroke her all over and groom her. I thought it was time to try fitting her with a headcollar, but one look at it was enough for Cally. Off she went across the field and I was back to square one, sitting in the field, ignoring her, with the headcollar over my shoulder.

But there was a bigger problem – winter was approaching and the summer field we used had no shelter. Cally had no hint of a winter coat growing, as she was used to warmer climes, and the bitter coastal wind was beginning to bite. I needed to move Cally and Almansor down the lane to the paddock by the stables. But how, when I couldn't catch her?

Then Poppy devised a plan. It wasn't perfect, but we didn't have much choice – we blocked both ends of the lane with two 4x4s and Poppy rode Almansor from the summer field down the track to the winter grazing. Would Cally follow? We just didn't know. Thankfully, keen not to be left

There was a bigger problem – winter was approaching and the summer field we used had no shelter

on her own, she trotted behind into the safety of the winter paddock. Over the coming weeks, we placed Cally's feed on the yard and left the gate open so she could come and go freely. To begin with she was extremely nervous, but as the days went by she began to relax, and soon I could stand and groom her while she ate. The next hurdle was to begin feeding her in her stable and, by keeping the same, quiet routine, Cally eventually accepted that, too. Accepting the headcollar wasn't too far behind, and we spent lots of time practising putting it on and taking it off, and then leading her to and from the field.

Days progressed and we kept on with small steps. I could now pick out all her feet and decided to book Cally in to see the physio and dentist. To my surprise, the physio said there was absolutely nothing wrong with her. So it was the turn of the dentist. Although my dentist is extremely good with nervous horses, I thought this might be a step too far for Cally, but her teeth needed checking. The appointed hour arrived and, much to Cally's horror, a strange man pulled up in a car and took out a bucket of jangling implements. The sight of this was too much for her and she hid in the back of the stable. Things weren't looking good. I explained Cally's background to the dentist and he went quietly into her stable. She remained suspicious at first, but gradually he started to win her over. Eventually he introduced the rasp – not as a rasp, but sideways like a bit. Once she got used to

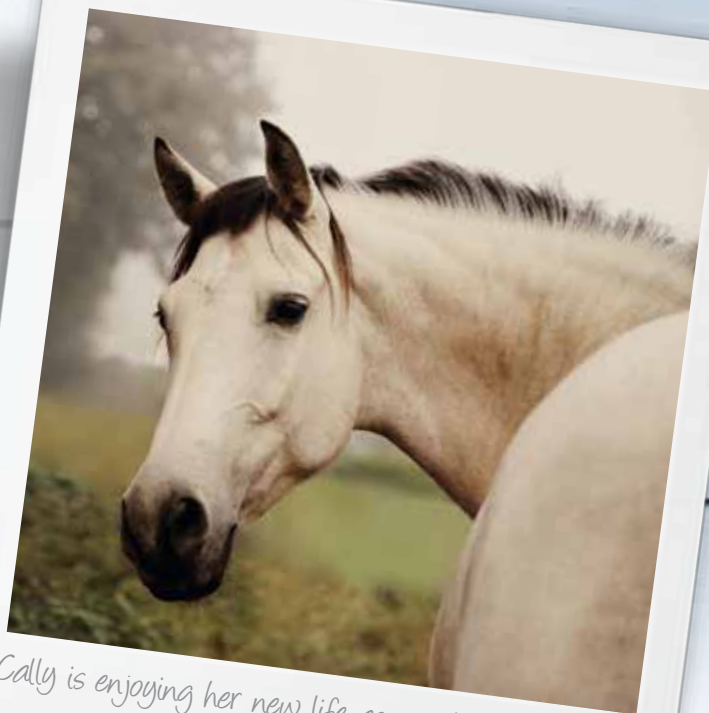
that, he carefully repositioned it and started gently rasping her teeth. Very quickly, with a minimum of fuss, it was all done. Cally's teeth had grown more on one side than the other and were twisting her jaw, but now she was back in balance and it was time to reintroduce the tack.

To my surprise, Cally accepted the bridle well. On went the numnah, then the saddle. She soon settled and we began to do a little work on the lunge in walk and trot. Cally had one ear on me and was looking for clues all the time to try to do the right thing. After a week of gentle lunging, I began to teach Cally to stand quietly at the mounting block. I then started with some pre-flight checks – banging stirrups, clattering on the saddle and behind it, testing her girth and flopping about with the saddle flaps.

At last the time seemed right to get back on Cally. Very calmly and quietly, Poppy started putting weight into the stirrup and then half mounting her again. While Cally was calmer and more confident than she had been when we had backed her previously, Poppy and I knew it was nowhere near a done deal that Cally would happily let Poppy get back on her again. But within a few days, Cally had settled enough that Poppy was able to lean over the saddle, and eventually sit astride and upright.

Over the next week, we repeated the process every day, and Cally was soon walking and trotting around the arena. But there was a new problem – Cally kept chucking her head around and getting her tongue over the bit. We hoped the problem would resolve itself, but it simply got worse. Was this the reason Cally had ended up in such dire circumstances back in Portugal, because there was something wrong with her that caused her to be a head-shaker? It

At last the time seemed right to get back on Cally



Cally is enjoying her new life as a riding horse in Cornwall

”

was time to call in an expert in the form of my instructor, Kate.

Kate watched Poppy ride Cally, and then suggested changing the bit she was wearing to make it harder for Cally to get her tongue over the bit. This

would hopefully help her to focus on her work, rather than fussing with her mouth. At first

Cally shook her head and tried her usual method of getting her tongue over the bit, but now it wasn't working.

The head-shaking reduced in frequency, and soon Cally was taking the contact and starting to work in a lovely outline.

As I stood watching Poppy and Cally trot around the arena in harmony, it seemed a million miles from the starving, nervous horse that had stepped off the boat from Portugal only eight months before. And I began to feel excited for Cally's future. ■



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Various products using the terminology hypochlorous are actually hypochlorite based. Some hypochlorite based products contain a mixture of chlorine, hypochlorous acid and sodium hypochlorite at an acidic pH. They are unstable and can decay rapidly, and chlorine and sodium hypochlorite are toxic, corrosive, and can damage fabrics. Check with your supplier.

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Two lucky runners up will also win the chance to watch the classes on Saturday 10 October, with a **pair of daytime best seat tickets** each, as well as a **bundle of Britains Farm Toys**.

Britains Farm Toys are the producers of Europe's most popular collectable agricultural and construction die-cast and plastic replica models. They offer a huge selection of farm toys, including tractors, trailers, farm machinery, animals and buildings, and they have recently launched a new equestrian-inspired selection that includes a Land Rover Defender, featuring realistic lights and sounds, with a matching horse trailer complete with mare and foal.



Which vehicle replica has Britains Farm Toys recently launched?

Tie-breaker: Why should you win exclusive backstage tickets to the Horse of the Year Show?



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Legal BITTING

Checking whether your horse's bit is legal for the competition you've entered can save you time, money and a lot of hassle. Eliminate your chance of elimination by following our guide to legal biting

Dictionary corner

Snaffle – a simple bit, typically jointed, used with a single set of reins.

Bridoon – a thin snaffle bit, used in conjunction with a curb bit in a double bridle.

Ported – an unjointed bit with an upwards curve, designed to allow more room for the horse's tongue.

Lip strap – a thin strap running under the horse's muzzle between the shanks of the bit, designed to prevent the horse from catching them in his mouth.

Tongue strap – a strip of cloth or rubber, passed through the mouth and tied below the chin to prevent the tongue coming over the top of the bit.

You've paid your entry and organised your transport, practised your dressage test and done enough gridwork to last a lifetime, but failing the tack inspection will see you disqualified from the competition and your hard work will be wasted.

Many riders, particularly those starting out on the competition circuit, fall foul of the rules and regulations surrounding tack. An area that can be particularly confusing is biting and which types are acceptable for each discipline. Gone are the days where you either rode in a snaffle or a pelham, there's now myriad options and it's important to know what's allowed in your chosen discipline. Bit materials have evolved and more riders are choosing to ride in bitless bridles or synthetic bits. We checked the rule books for the most popular disciplines.

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British Dressage (BD)

Rubber, nylon and other synthetic material bits are permitted. It's not possible to modify your horse's bit, so it must be used in the manufactured condition without any addition to any part. This means you can't wrap tape or bandage around the mouthpiece, for example. It's acceptable for the mouthpiece to consist of a mixture of metals. A plastic snaffle with a cylindrical rotating mouthpiece is permitted. The minimum diameter of the mouthpiece for young horse classes is 14mm.

Double bridles

The lever arm of the curb is limited to 10cm below the mouthpiece. The upper cheek must not be longer than the lower cheek. The ring of the bridoon bit must not exceed 8cm in diameter. If the curb has a sliding mouthpiece, the lever arm of the curb below the mouthpiece should not measure more than 10cm when the mouthpiece is at the uppermost position. The diameter of the mouthpiece of the bridoon and curb must be such as not to hurt the horse. Rigid bits coated in plastic are permissible in a double bridle, but flexible rubber bits are not. The curb chain, including its cover, may be made of leather, metal, neoprene or rubber, or a combination of these materials, and must be fitted in the conventional way.

A bridoon is the small, thin snaffle that is used in conjunction with a curb bit on a double bridle.

Only the following bridoons are acceptable for all levels in British Dressage



Loose ring



A



B



C

Jointed mouthpiece where the middle piece should be rounded. Eggbutt sides also allowed. Bridoon bit with rotating middle piece. Rotary bit with rotating middle piece (a,b,c)

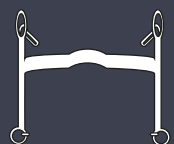


Eggbutt

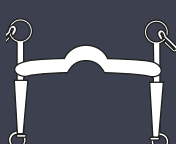


Hanging cheeks

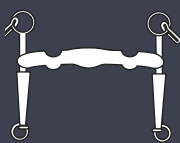
Permitted curbs



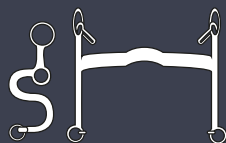
Straight cheeks and port



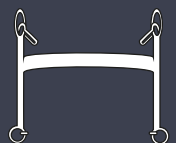
Port and sliding mouthpiece (Weymouth)



Variation of bits above



S-curved cheeks



Half-moon

Curb accessories



Curb chain (metal or leather, or a combination)



Lip strap



Leather cover for curb chain



Rubber cover for curb chain. NB Curb chain hooks must not be fixed



British Showjumping (BS)

British Showjumping competitions follow the FEI rules, which state that for jumping, the reins must be attached to the bit or directly to the bridle. Gags and hackamores are allowed, but the use of a tongue strap is forbidden. ➔





British Eventing (BE)

For the **dressage** element, a bridle with a bit that is used in the conventional style is compulsory. Permitted bits are the same as BD. Double bridles are only permitted at Intermediate Novice and above.

For **showjumping** and **cross-country**, competitors may also use any normal jumping bit, pelham, American or continental gag, hackamore and any form of bitless bridle. Reins may be attached to roundings, as well as the bit rings themselves. Competitors may not use a curb rein that passes through the rings of a running martingale.



Riding Club



Permitted bits are listed in the British Dressage rulebook, but here's a quick guide...

Dressage and riding test

Prelim and Novice – snaffle bridles only.

Elementary and Medium level – ordinary snaffle or double bridles. Bit guards, tongue guards and tongue straps or tongue ties are not permitted.

Horse trials dressage and combined training dressage

Bit guards, tongue guards and tongue straps or tongue ties are not permitted.

Show and style jumping

Hackamores and other bitless bridles are permitted for senior competitions. Bit guards can be worn, provided they are made from rubber and are smooth on both sides. No tongue straps or tongue ties.

Horse trials showjumping, combined showjumping and all cross-country, including Festival Challenge

Tongue guards that are properly made and detached from the reins and bits are allowed. Bitless bridles are permitted for senior competitions. Bit guards can be worn, provided they are made from rubber and are smooth on both sides. No tongue straps or tongue ties.



Pony Club

The permitted bits are as per the British Dressage rules. Dressage, cross-country and showjumping are subject to the following conditions...

Double bridles can only be used at Open level. Bitless bridles or hackamores cannot be used. Bit guards are not allowed. All synthetic bits must be black, brown or white. Bits must be in the manufacturer's original condition without any additions or alterations. Tongue straps and tongue grids are not allowed. Tongue guards are permitted for showjumping and cross-country. ■





HOW TO MAKE A SADDLE

You may be surprised to learn how much time and consideration goes into making the different components of your saddle. David Kempsey, Managing Director of WOW Saddles, explains the process

1 THE TREE

The core of almost all saddles is the tree, which sits on the horse's back and provides the fundamental structure. Saddle trees are made from various materials, most commonly plastic, laminated plywood, carbon fibre or a combination of those materials. When creating a tree, it is vitally important that it's constructed accurately and symmetrically because this is the base that everything else mounts on. Arguably, trees constructed from moulded plastic tend to be very accurate when compared with trees made of traditional wood, because there are fewer variables to affect the finished product. Plastic trees leave the mould as a finished article with no human intervention and, therefore, no human error.

Plastic and carbon fibre trees tend not to need the addition of metalwork as a reinforcement, whereas wooden trees need additional support or they will split and crack under pressure.

Before the spring tree was invented, saddles were made using substantially more wood than they are today. Because they weren't reinforced with metal, the wood was much thicker, which resulted in the saddles being much heavier. The spring tree was developed to save weight by minimising the amount of wood and replacing it with spring steel. The use of the word 'spring' doesn't refer to the tree's flexibility, but its strength and weight. Some people believe that trees stretch over time, however, this isn't the case. If they suffer trauma, such as a horse falling on them, they can break. You should test your saddle occasionally to make sure you cannot flex it. Even if it has a spring tree, it should be rigid and not make any clicking or grinding sounds.

Our expert



David Kempsell

is the Managing Director of WOW saddles and together with his wife Maggie, is the concepts designer, with responsibility for all of the brand innovations including the development of Flair air flocking.

2 THE SEAT

The second phase in saddle manufacture is the construction of the seat. Traditionally, saddlers created webbing across the hole in the middle of the tree, like you would a traditional seat on a chair. Unsurprisingly, because the seat isn't flat, this requires a high level of skill to ensure the webbing maintains an even shape when taught. The tree and webbing are then covered with a thin layer of foam and shaped by hand. Most plastic and carbon fibre trees no longer have a hole in the centre, and many companies take advantage of this by using a moulded foam seat. This allows the seat to contain more foam and, therefore, offer better shock absorption.

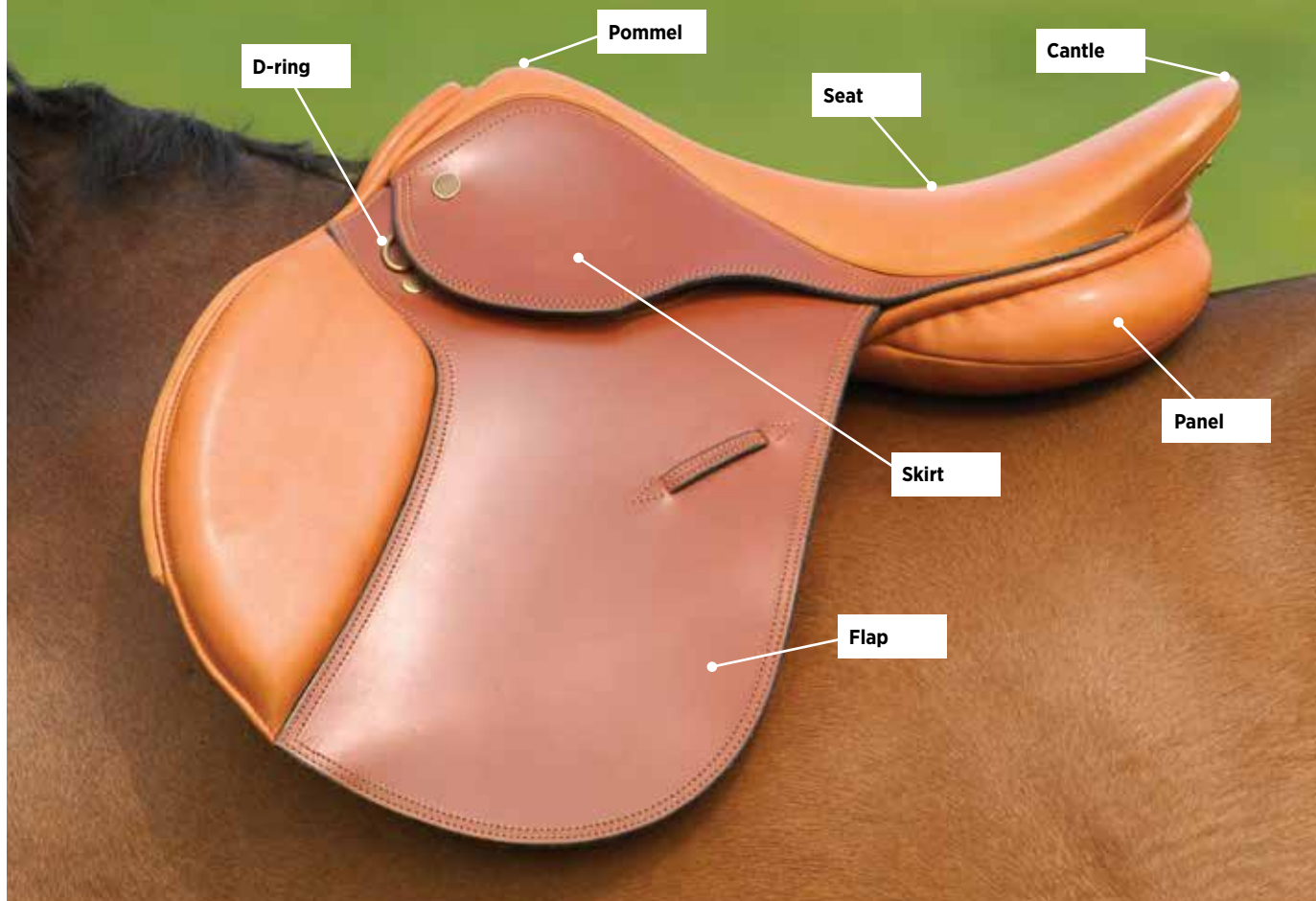
Once the tree and webbing have been created, the next step is for the leather to be stretched over the seat. The traditional method is to soak the leather in water so that the fibres swell and become malleable. The leather is then pulled over the seat



and tacked into place. This process isn't easy because one piece of leather must be draped over a three-dimensional object, and all the creases removed. The seat is then left overnight in a warm room to allow the leather to dry out, shrink back and adopt the shape of the seat.

Once completely dry, the tacks that held the leather in place are removed and the detailed elements of the seat are put in place. The seat must line up exactly with the original stapling or it will be crooked. This is where skill and eye for detail are really important. All the facings and trimmings are mounted to cover up any parts that should not be visible.

PARTS OF THE SADDLE



3 THE FLAPS

There are generally two methods for creating the flaps on a saddle.

The first is using butt leather, which is a good-quality part of the animal hide that comprises solid, thick leather. Its thickness is important because the flaps are at the mercy of significant wear and tear, and thinner types of leather cut from other parts of the animal's hide wouldn't be suitable. This simple, traditional method involves cutting out the flap and polishing the edges to get a smooth, flat, shiny surface before it's stained and sealed.

The alternative method of forming the flaps uses boning patterns. Boning literally uses a piece of bone or a similar smooth-surfaced material to hand-form the leather into a shape, a bit like putting pastry into a baking tin. The saddler lays soft hide over the mould and works the edges onto the mould with the bone, before gluing the other synthetic materials that will make up the body of the flap into the boned, leather shape. This is a very time-consuming and skilled task. What starts as a piece of hard leather becomes a beautifully-formed flap

that's so pliable, the rider hardly notices it's there beneath their leg.

Mono-flap saddles use dressage-style girthing and, therefore, do not require two flaps of leather to hide the buckles of the girth. They offer far better contact for the rider's leg and a superior feeling from the horse.

When there are more complex flaps with large blocks, it may be necessary to wet-stretch the leather, using the same process that is used when making the seat. Once this process is complete, details such as quilting lines and stitching can be added in. It is during these processes that attention to detail is imperative. Traditionally, the individual parts of the saddle were lined up by eye, but nowadays more manufacturers are using machines to ensure that there is perfect symmetry of each piece. Machine cutting eliminates human error and allows for easier replicability. Additionally, the machines can draw or punch a reference mark on the individual pieces so that it's mirrored perfectly on both sides.

4 THE PANEL

The last component in the process is the panel. The art to creating a good panel is choosing where the leather is cut from on the animal's hide and how it's machined. Attention to detail and the quality of the animal hide used is imperative in these final stages of saddle manufacture. The leather must not be too thin and stretchy, nor too thick and stiff. Panels can be made as linked pairs with the sweat-flaps – which lie against the horse – attached, as is found in the majority of English-made saddles, or made individually, as seen in a lot of continental saddles.

Whichever method is used, the emphasis should be on making a symmetrical pair of panels. One of the most basic problems is that a sewing machine is not handed – you don't get left-handed and right-handed versions. Therefore, if we look at any bit of sewing on the left panel, it will be sewn in the opposite direction to the right panel. This can produce a bias, or twist, that can be eradicated by making individual panels that are more reliably symmetrical.



Flocking

The feel of the saddle on your horse's back comes down to flocking. This is another area that requires exceptional care and a good eye to flock the panels, so that they are a symmetrical pair and sit level on the horse's back. Flocking generally consists of lambswool or synthetic materials.

There are various methods of flocking a new saddle, but by hand is far superior. Sometimes you will find that flocking is literally blown into the panel by a hose, but often this is using shorter fibres that are denser and less shock-absorbing. The long strands in lambswool act like springs, allowing for small amounts of movement to disperse pressure. In order to maintain its performance, lambswool flocking should be regularly replaced. Speak to your saddler to find out more about your individual saddle.

Foam flocked panels look and feel nice, but cannot be adjusted with any ease. They are generally found on jumping saddles

where the unfortunate practice of using pads to make the saddle fit is still common. It's ironic that the cheapest and quickest method of flocking is often used on the most expensive jumping saddles.

Traditional wool flocking materials can become unevenly compacted over time, which is why it's important for owners of flocked saddles to have them checked regularly. The alternative is air flocking. This requires the same amount of adjustment as the horse changes shape, however, unlike traditional flocking, the adjustments can be made very quickly and conveniently on-site.

The feel of the saddle on your horse's back comes down to flocking



Did you know?

- A leather saddle usually takes 15–20 hours to make, from the very start to the finish. This doesn't include the time spent allowing for leather to dry.

- The pressure from the stirrup bar can compress flocking over time. This effectively kneads the flocking away behind the stirrup bar, and creates a hole in the flock. Turn your saddle over and run the flat of your hand along the panels. If there's a hole in the flocking behind the stirrup bars, it's time to get your saddle checked.

- Adjustable head plates have become popular in the past decade, in order for people to accommodate their horse's changing shape. Something to bear in mind, however, is that there are times when the angle of the horse's withers doesn't change, but the spinal profile does. In other words, your horse's back may have become broader without the angle of his withers changing, which will affect the way the saddle fits.



The leather low-down

Sometimes it's easy to forget that your leather saddle started life as an animal. When you take a full cowhide, each cut of leather will look and work differently, depending on the area of the hide it's taken from. The **neck** tends to be used for the hidden parts such as the back of the flaps and top panels of the gullet lining, as it will show more signs of wrinkles and creasing. The **belly** tends to provide the stretchiest leather, which is poorer quality, so this area tends to be used for scrap. The **ribcage** area is the best quality and this is where the panels and flaps are cut from, but it has to be carefully selected as it can have stretch marks. The **rump** area can also provide good-quality leather, but is usually the worst for scarring – cows like a good scratch on trees or wire fences! The seat is usually taken from the rump.



The bigger picture

The equestrian market only makes up a few per cent of the whole tanning industry, yet we require the best-quality leather. This makes it very hard to find good-quality hides and contributes to the price distinction between saddles made of lesser materials. Saddle-worthy hides often come from Europe, specifically Catalonian cattle, because they roam over vast areas and have little fencing. One of the biggest headaches for saddlers is to find hides that are not scarred from tick bites and barbed wire fences.

After the major outbreak of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), the EU laws changed meaning that cattle have to be slaughtered for meat before the age of 30 months. This means we do not get as many mature hides today as in the past. Unfortunately, older hides are stronger and have more stretch, which makes them better for making saddles. Younger leathers, particularly calf leather, are not as fibrous, so you have to be careful not to stretch them too much and tear them.

What do you know about the leather that makes up your saddle?



Quality control

There are different grades of leathers. The third and fourth grades are lesser quality, and will often be painted with polyurethane and used for cheaper furniture. Makers of good-quality saddles will only use first grade leather for saddles. Remember, leather is a natural material so it's unlikely to be uniform and perfect. The only way that this can occur is if it has been painted with polyurethane paint. One way to test your leather is to see how it responds to moisture. If it sucks up oil or moisture like a sponge, then it's good-quality leather. If the moisture sits on the surface in a small pool and doesn't absorb, it is more than likely a lesser quality leather that has been painted.



Care and condition

When considering how to care for your saddle, the best products contain lanolin, beeswax and some form of oil. In fact, any vegetable oil, within reason, could be used and many products use rendered animal fats in their ingredients as well. You should not treat a new saddle any differently to a second-hand saddle – both need feeding. Always clean dirt away first using warm water. Allow the leather to dry completely and then apply a hide food that contains waxes and oils. If your saddle is really dry, consider using a vegetable oil – the same that you use for cooking is fine – as long as your saddle is not made of polyurethane (painted leather), as this will not absorb much at all. ■



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On the surface

Freshen up your existing manège with a new arena topping. These modern surface additions will not only improve the appearance of a tired looking arena, but it'll improve the feel for your horse, too. There's now a wide variety to choose from to suit your budget

Andrews Bowen – Stability Pro Synthetic Fibre

andrewsbowen.co.uk

01995 672103

A 20mx60m arena requires 8 bales

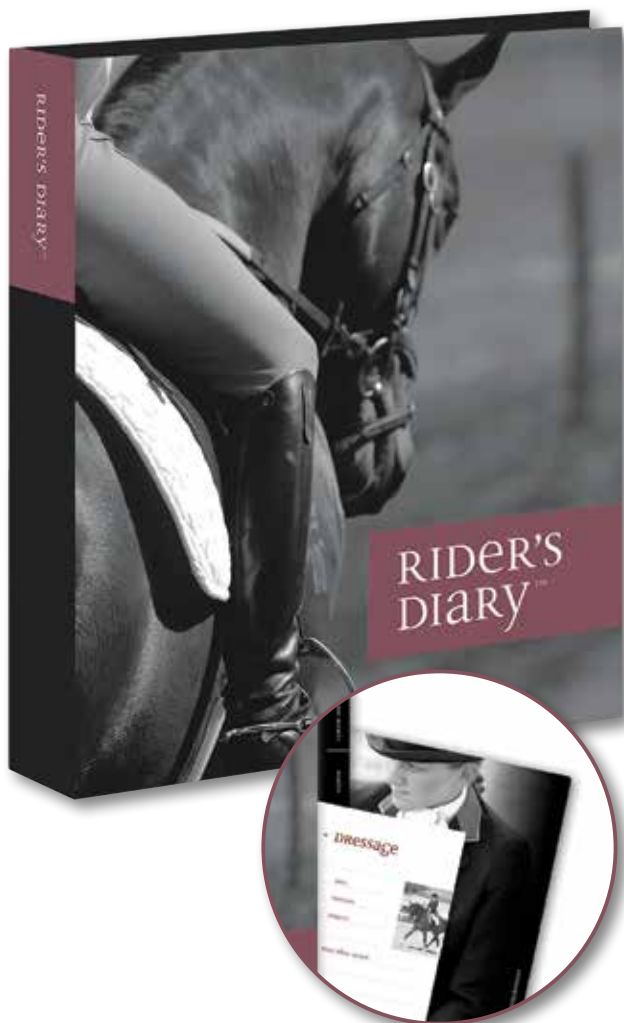
RRP £585 per bale

A blend of elastic fibres, polypropylene, PVC granules and polyester fibres that provide a secure but forgiving surface that will reduce repetitive strain injury. Horses are able to travel over the surface because the synthetic fibres act as a 'root structure' similar to the best turf. The fibres require integration into the existing arena surface to create a blend of sand and fibre.



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Leisure Ride Surfaces – Trojan PolyFibre

leisureridesurfaces.co.uk
07989 446296

A 20mx60m arena requires 12 bales
RRP £336 per bale

This surface consists of 100% polyester felt, chopped to size. It won't rot or break down in UV light and traps moisture to keep the sand firm, which reduces the need for external irrigation. It's easy to install and requires little maintenance, is dust-free and is white, which looks great against the sand.

Mainland Aggregates – Arena-Flex

mainlandaggregates.co.uk
01234 831108

A 20mx60m arena requires 30 tonnes
RRP £78 per tonne

These rubber chippings consist of 99.99% wire-free aircraft and lorry tyres, which are passed through a specialised granulator and then screened. It's suitable for use in all but the most extreme weather conditions, is frost-resistant and drains well to produce a cushioned, non-slip surface.

Martin Collins Enterprises – CLOPF Fibre

martincollins.com
01488 71100

A 20mx60m arena requires 4.2 tonnes
RRP £540 per tonne

This gives a root structure to your arena surface, which provides superior stability to sand alone. The result is that your horse can work on top of the surface, which reduces the risk of jarring and lower limb injuries. It also helps to retain moisture within the sand, which means less maintenance and less requirement for additional irrigation. ➤





Equestrian Direct – Turffloat

equestriandirectltd.co.uk

0844 4124020

A 20mx60m arena requires 10 bales

RRP £346.80 per bale

The binding fibres create minimal kickback and surface movement, allowing for low maintenance. The surface provides a stable surface and secure footing, which gives increased confidence for both the horse and rider. It's dust-free, frost-resistant in winter conditions and the surface can be customised to the rider's own preference. Turffloat provides balanced hoof support in both vertical and horizontal planes, which reduces jarring and helps to prevent injury.

Southern Counties Equestrian – RubberCushion

southerncountiesequestrian.com

01252 289019

A 20mx60m arena requires 35 tonnes

RRP £90 per tonne

This surface provides a comfortable, bouncy, non-slip ride that is safe for both the horse and rider. This equestrian rubber is shredded to 15–20mm from used car tyres and is suitable for all riding arenas, gallops and lunge rings. It adds frost resistance and helps retain the moisture in the fibres, preventing the rubber mixing in with sand. Easy to maintain and provides a non-concussive surface that helps to protect your horse's lower limbs and joints while working.

Equestrian Surfaces – Economy Stabilising Fibre

equestriansurfaces.co.uk

0800 6520810

A 20mx60m arena requires 12 bales

RRP £120 per bale

It will enhance the performance of any sand surface and can be incorporated into new or existing sand. The unique composition of durable polypropylene fibre is precision cut and blended with rubber fibres, which allows horses to remain on top of the surface and not work into it. The economy fibres are a cost-effective way to improve the stability of the sand and aid moisture retention. The fibres are delivered in bales, straight into the arena, if required. ➤



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Cashel Bay JJ, winning Horse of the Year Show 2014, with 15 year old Lucy Eddis
photo: www.equestriaphotography.co.uk

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Maintenance equipment



Sheepcote – Dust Free Ride Arena watering system

sheepcote.co.uk
01432 850396

RRP £3,360 (manual and automated systems available) for a 20mx60m outdoor arena or for an indoor overhead watering system

A cost-effective solution to control dust is a watering system. Dryness causes the surface to become powdery and is a major contributing factor to early disintegration. For this reason, installers of riding surfaces recommend maintaining the correct level of moisture in the surface both indoors and outdoors.



SCH Supplies Ltd – Large area manège rake

schsupplies.co.uk
01473 328272

RRP from £1,298.40

Available in 1,220mm (ball hitch or three-point linkage) and 1,800mm (three-point linkage only)

Suitable for both rubber and sand surfaces. A single row of depth-adjustable tines is at the front (although another row may be added on request), loosening and separating the material. A levelling bar behind the tines then levels out the surface and the rear roller completes the perfect finish. The ball hitch is adjustable for multiple towing vehicles.



Chapman Machinery – MG250 arena leveller

01288 308149
chapman.co.uk
RRP £1,800

The large, 2.4m working width ensures large arenas and gallops are levelled quickly and easily. The robust steel frame and flotation tyres offer smooth running over rough surfaces. The spring steel tines are tough, yet will not damage the membrane under your surface, and the following roller vibrates as it rotates to give a firm, but yielding surface, just like real turf. An integral levelling blade with perimeter blade removes banking resulting from circular schooling or lungeing.



Equivation – Easilevel

equivation.com
01825 840022
RRP £495

A versatile arena maintenance tool, specifically designed to cope with a variety of riding surfaces. It has an easy-to-operate height adjustment system, a sturdy arm to deal with kick board accumulation and can be towed by even very small vehicles. Two parallel rows of tines efficiently rake through the surface, allowing fibrous surfaces to slip through them and avoid the large-build up.



Pegasus Arenas – Micro leveller

pegasus-arenas.co.uk
01547 560060
RRP £1,320 including delivery

This compact 5ft leveller with tow hitch enables easy attachment to a variety of vehicles, even a large quad. Featuring two crumbler rollers, one on the front and one on the rear, it also features spring tines with fully-adjustable height which makes it easy to manoeuvre the unit, even outside of the arena. ■



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This month we love...

Take a look at some of our favourite horsey products this month

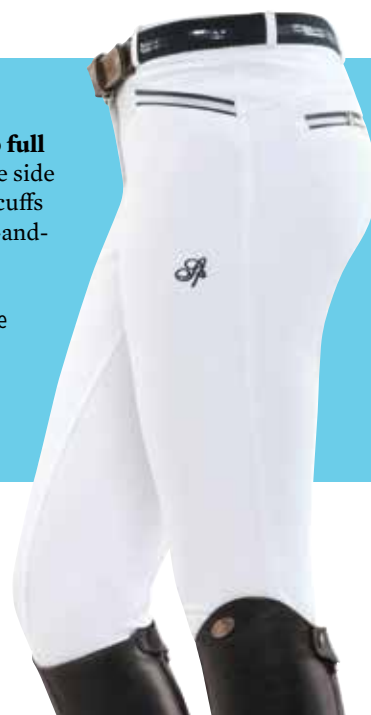
ReadySupp Performance Joint contains glucosamine and provides optimum support for hard-working horses and those with injury or joint stiffness.

RRP £72 for a 30-day supply
01672 541157
readysupp.com



Spooks Ricarda grip full seat breeches feature side pockets, stretchy leg cuffs and contrasting navy-and-white piping.

Colours: Navy, white, beige or brown
Sizes: XXS-XL
RRP £103.95
spooksuk.com



Tried & tested

Equilibrium Simply Irresistible feed topping

This feed topping is made from a natural blend of fruits or vegetables.

Available in five fabulous fruits or five virtuous vegetables.

RRP £12.95 for 1.5kg
equilibriumproducts.com

Pros: "This really encouraged my horse to finish all his feed when it had medication in. It was also handy to put in his treat ball to keep him interested, despite being on a restricted diet."

Cons: "I thought it was quite expensive to feed on a daily basis, but it did keep him interested."

Buy if... you need to keep your horse interested in his feed.



Tried & tested

Muck Boot Company Firenze boot

The Firenze features a neoprene shaft and stylish, wood-effect heel stack.

Colours: Black or brown

Sizes: 3-9

RRP £150

muckbootco.co.uk

Pros: "They were very comfortable, totally waterproof and easy to get on. I think they are good value for money and great for all occasions – on the yard, dog walking and festivals."

Cons: "The innersole came out each time I took my foot out, but it was quite easy to put back in."

Buy if... you need a versatile pair of boots.





The **Champion Evolution Pro** riding hat has a low-profile, lightweight, glass-fibre shell and incorporates a high-tech, ventilated airflow system.

Colour: Black
 Sizes: 6¼–7¾
 RRP from £129.50
 0113 2707000
championhats.co.uk



Pro Performance XC boots provide protection with a strike guard that is flexible and conforms to the shape of the leg, but will harden to a rigid protective wall upon impact.

Colours: Black or white
 Sizes: M or L
 RRP £69.95 for fronts and £74.95 for hinds
profchoice.com



Uvex SGL 202 frameless equestrian glasses provide feather-light, unbreakable, polarising lenses with 100% UVA, UVB and UVC protection.

Available in a variety of finishes, colours and styles.
 RRP from £16.95
uvex-sports.com/en

Tried & tested

Medifarm Insect-Eco fly spray

Protects against flies and midges.

RRP £33.85 for 750ml
medifarm.co.uk

Pros: "It really seemed to work at keeping the flies and midges away for much longer, and my horse hasn't had nearly as many fly bites as he usually gets at this time of year."

Cons: "It's very pricey for a fly spray, but it did seem to work for much longer than other ones I have tried, so I ended up using less and the bottle lasted longer than I expected. It has a very strong smell, but this must be how it works."

Buy if... your horse needs heavy-duty fly protection.



Tried & tested

Elim-a-Net

A slow-feeding haynet that features a unique inner-net design with a vertical strand through each hole in the net.

Colours: Blue/black, green/black, red/black

Sizes: Pony, cob or horse

RRP from £10.99

07715 172470

parellproducts.com

Pros: "I was worried my horse would find the smaller holes frustrating and get cross, but he didn't at all. I found the net great for stopping him scattering hay across the lorry floor, too, which was an unexpected bonus."

Cons: "I hoped it would slow his eating a bit more than it did, although there was definitely a difference in the speed he finished his hay."

Buy if... you're looking for a smart net to keep hay tidy and slow down eating time.





Equi-Eaze horseshoes are light, flexible, shock-absorbing and supportive, ideal for aiding performance and remedial use.

Colours: Natural, red or purple
 Sizes: 00-5
 RRP £20
 01388 710338
plastichorseshoes.co.uk



Hire a Micklem bridle from **Equestrian Hire** so that you can try before you buy.

Colours: Black or brown
 Sizes: Large horse, standard, small horse or pony
 £20 for two weeks' hire
 07973 284764
equestrianhire.co.uk

The **Bold portable tack box** fits in an average-sized car, and has a removable saddle support and folding handle for easy manoeuvring.

Colours: Black, red, blue, grey, purple, pink or green.
 RRP from £149.95
 07904 251040
bold-box.co.uk



Tried & tested

Woof Wear paddock boots

These boots feature a smooth, full-grain leather outer and luxurious in-sole for extreme all-day comfort.

Colours: Black
Sizes: 5-9
RRP £80
woofwear.com

Pros: "They were very comfortable, supportive and didn't slip in the stirrups. They are well-made – the zip is strong and does up easily and even after lots of wear they are still looking good. They clean up well and look quite smart."

Cons: "The tab at the back could be a bit longer to make it easier to pull them on, but it wasn't a big issue."

Buy if... you want good value, casual boots for riding and being at the yard.



Ideal for use during the summer to help deter flies, **Lillidale Citronella shampoo** is a gentle shampoo containing citronella oil.

RRP £6.99 for 500ml
supplementsolutions.co.uk



Rate this issue for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see page 9). tinyurl.com/RateSept15

Perfect prizes!

1 Belt up

to win!

One lucky reader will win a **Childéric Silhouette dressage girth**, worth £240. The Silhouette girth has been designed to prevent your saddle from slipping forwards and evenly distribute pressure on the girth area. It features triple-thickness, elasticated ends and an ergonomic cut – the width can also be adjusted if required. Available in black, Irish or master, in short girth sizes 45–85cm and long girth sizes 110–180cm.



For more information, visit childericsaddles.co.uk

3 Sparkly seat

to win!

Three lucky readers will each win a pair of **Equetech Fleur breeches**, worth £91.50. Featuring front and back jean-style pockets with a pretty diamanté scatter pattern, these breeches also have a comfort waistband and Lycra-panelled hems for added comfort and less bulk. Available in white or black denim, in sizes 24–34in.



For more information, call 01296 688966 or visit equetech.com

2 Show ready

to win!

Two lucky readers will each win an **Absorbine prize bundle**, worth £120. Included is ShowSheen stain remover and whitener (RRP £9.99), ShowClean whitening shampoo (RRP £13.37), Horseman's One Step leather cleaning and conditioning spray (RRP £11.83), UltraShield insect and fly repellent (RRP £20.53), Magic Cushion hoof cooling and cushioning packing (RRP £50.24) and Hooflex liquid hoof dressing (RRP £13.55).



For more information, visit absorbine.co.uk

1 Make it two

to win!

One lucky reader will win a **Rambo Micklem multibridle** (RRP £130) and a **Rambo Micklem diamanté competition bridle** (RRP £150).

The Micklem bridle is designed to fit the shape of your horse's skull, avoiding pressure on sensitive areas. The multibridle is available in black or brown and the diamanté competition bridle is available in black. The bridles are available in sizes large horse, standard horse, small horse and pony.



For more information, visit equestrianhire.co.uk

To enter, complete the form on page 160 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

£1,459-worth of prizes to be won!

8

Balanced act

to win!

Eight lucky readers will each win a 3kg bag of **NAF Five Star Optimum feed balancer**, worth £27.50. With a broad spectrum of vitamins, minerals, and prebiotics and probiotics, this balancer will help to maintain your horse's condition and health. Concentrated and easy to feed, Optimum comes in a highly-palatable pellet form. It's formulated to complement either a high-fibre, low-concentrate diet or a performance diet.



For more information, visit naf-equine.eu

4

All bases covered

to win!

Four lucky readers will each win a **Fly Away prize bundle**, worth £51. Included is Tangle Away detangler (RRP £6.49), Seal to Heal wound cream (RRP £9.99), Germ Away barrier control biosecurity spray (£5.99), Max Strength fly repellent (£12.49), anti-parasite spray (RRP £8.99) and aloe vera wound soothing gel (RRP £7.49).



For more information, call 01384 877857 or visit flyaway.ltd.uk

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Scopey jumping pony

● **13.3hh**, British Riding Pony mare, 7 yrs. Has amazing scope to take a confident child through affiliated SJ. Has competed at 80cm and jumped 1m at home. Has been XC, hacks alone or in company. Lives in or out, extremely good-doer. Not a novice ride. £2,750.

07710 555495 (Dorset)



● **16.1hh**, warmblood mare, 18 yrs. Would suit mother/daughter share. Safe, but not a novice ride as forward-going. £1,500.

07508 818421 (Essex)



● **13.1hh**, Welsh Section C mare, 7 yrs. Knows all the basics, but not a novice ride. Would suit confident rider to bring her on. £1,250.

07791 640624 (Lancashire)



● **15.1hh**, ISH gelding, 10 yrs. Never strong. Has careful jump both SJ and XC. Done all PC/RC activities. Would suit confident rider. £3,550.

07875 700414 (Worcestershire)



● **15.3hh**, Selle Français mare, 21 yrs. This mare has done it all – SJ, XC, DR. Not a novice ride as forward going. Never sick or sorry. £1,000.

07972 228856 (Oxfordshire)



● **13.2hh**, Welsh Section C gelding, 18 yrs. Has done SJ, XC, DR and PC. Hacks alone or in company. Great confidence giver. £2,500.

07891 182014 (Kinross)



● **16.1hh**, ISH mare, 9 yrs. Bold, brave and fun ride. Hunted in Ireland. Careful, scopey jump with a great attitude. Oozes quality. £4,750.

07912 612095 (Kent)



● **14.2hh**, Arab mare, 17 yrs. Safe pony who has been there and done it. Done all PC activities, DR, SJ and XC. Perfect all-rounder. £2,250.

07765 510590 (Bristol)



● **17.2hh**, Hanoverian X TB gelding, 13 yrs. Competed Novice BE and Discovery BS. Safe to hack, box, shoe and clip. £4,200.

07449 812013 (Suffolk)



Handsome cob

● **15.2hh**, cob gelding, 10 yrs. Hacks alone or in company, great in traffic. Lives in or out. Good to handle, box, catch and is well-behaved for the farrier. Done PC activities, XC, beach rides and pleasure rides. Has mild sweet itch, but controlled by Boett rug (included). £3,500.

07854 442009 (Suffolk)



● **15.1hh**, TB X, gelding, 5 yrs. Exceptional conformation with flashy movement. Jumping 1.10m at home and competed Novice BE. £5,500. **07771 541096 (Essex)**



● **14.1hh**, Welsh X cob mare, 6 yrs. Willing horse, jumping 1m with scope to do more. Not a novice ride due to her age. £2,495. **07557 679160 (Essex)**



Talented showjumper

● **16hh**, Selle Français gelding, 11 yrs. Talented, scopey horse jumping 1.40m at home with ease. Competed up to Foxhunters. Fast, but careful against the clock. Needs a competent rider – not a novice ride as has been known to buck. Fit and ready to go. £5,500. **07717 418268 (Oxfordshire)**



● **14hh**, cob gelding, 7 yrs. True traditional type. Competing Prelim and working towards Novice DR. Great showing prospect. £3,500. **07795 101571 (Bridgend)**



● **16hh**, warmblood gelding, 10 yrs. Has hunted and done team chasing. Competed BE100 and Newcomers BS. Potential to go further. £7,000. **07968 077208 (Buckinghamshire)**



● **14.2hh**, TB X, mare, 3 yrs. Will mature around 15hh. Beautiful temperament, clean-limbed and vice-free. £1,250. **07917 131526 (West Yorkshire)**



● **To make 16hh**, warmblood gelding, 1 yr. Bred to jump or event. Very well-handled. Good to catch and lead. Clean legs. £1,500. **07983 407064 (Swansea)**



Very smart riding cob

● **15.2hh**, KWPN mare, 9 yrs. By Longbeach Quidam de Revel. Lovely mare, good to do in all ways. Pleasure to own. Jumped up to Newcomers with scope to go on to Discovery. Has done XC and has beautiful flatwork with established changes. Five-star home only. £4,500. **07961 746499 (Durham)**



● **12hh**, mare, 8 yrs. Competed at BSPS shows, including Royal Windsor. Good to travel alone or in company. Loving pony. £3,000. **07545 696139 (Lancashire)**



● **14.2hh**, cob mare, 6 yrs. Traditional type. Sweet nature and fun to ride. Snaffle mouth. Hacks alone or in company. £2,500. **07795 571576 (Gloucestershire)**



● **14.2hh**, Connemara gelding, 8 yrs. Good paces and a bold jump. Fast against the clock. Hunted in Ireland. Not a novice ride. £4,500. **07982 708592 (North Yorkshire)**



● **16.3hh**, ISH gelding, 15 yrs. Hunted in Ireland, will comfortably jump 1m courses. Good for vet and farrier. Great personality. £2,000. **07427 623725 (East Sussex)**



● **13.3hh**, Welsh Section C gelding, 3 yrs. Beautiful, well-mannered pony. Hacks alone or in company. Good to shoe, box and clip. £1,000. **07951 334939 (Northumberland)**



● **16.2hh**, gelding, 5 yrs. Professionally broken and produced. now ready to go on and excel in any sphere. Great temperament. £5,500. **07805 283630 (Vale of Glamorgan)**

Exciting future potential

● **15.2hh**, ISH gelding, 9 yrs. Sweet-natured horse with a great temperament and potential. Has competed locally and hunted in Ireland. Good ground and stable manners. Not a novice ride as can get excited. Will go far in the right hands. Would suit a quiet, confident rider. £2,750. **07983 210507 (Newport)**



JARGON BUSTER BD: British Dressage; BN: British Novice; BS: British Showjumping; CS: cob size; CT: combined training; Disc: Discovery; DR: dressage; ER: endurance ride; Exp: experienced; F/M: freezemark; FR: first ridden; FS: full size; HDT: horse driving trials; HT: hunter trials; ID: Irish Draught; Inc: including; ISH: Irish Sport Horse; LDR: long-distance rides; LR: lead rein; M/chip: microchip; MG: mounted games; M/W: middleweight; ODE: one-day event; P/port: passport; PBA: part-bred Arab; PC: Pony Club; POA: price on application PS: pony size; pt-2-pt: point-to-point; R&D: ride-and-drive; RC: Riding Club; Reg: registered; ROR: Retraining of racehorses; Sec: section; SJ: showjumping; TB: Thoroughbred; Vacc: vaccinated; WB: Warmblood; WHP: working hunter pony; XC: cross-country.

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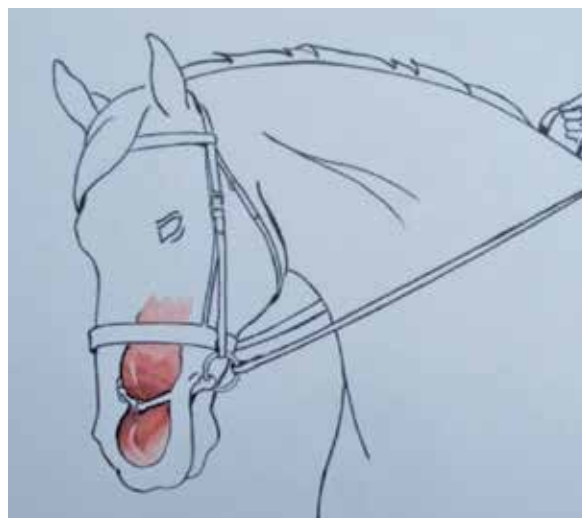
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The angle of pull: what it means for your horse

Your horse's tongue goes from the top of his throat to his lips, running vertically down his head.

Look at the angle of pull from the rider's hands to the bit – the tongue is being pulled back towards the bottom jaw.

When there is pressure on the tongue, it becomes much harder for the horse to swallow, and causes tension throughout his whole body.



Common problems



Horse above the bit

He is changing the angle of pull so the pressure is less on his tongue and more into the corners of his lips.



Horse behind the bit

No rider wants their horse in this position – so you give with your hands and the horse has reduced the pressure on his tongue.



Overactive mouth, tongue over bit, or outside mouth

The horse is moving his tongue away from the pressure, so that more pressure goes onto his bars.



Leaning or running through the bit

The horse has reduced the pressure on his tongue by changing the angle of pull and causing the bit to pull into the corners of his lips more than onto his tongue.



Pulling the tongue back into his throat

To release the pressure on his tongue, the horse pulls it up inside his mouth towards the top of his throat. This 'bunching up' of the tongue actually interferes with the horse's breathing.

Myler Bits offers the only truly systematic approach to biting

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- Available in a wide choice of mouthpieces and cheeks to allow the rider to choose the right bit for each individual horse and for the discipline they are riding in.
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- Organised into a progressive system, allowing the rider to change the bit's shape and action gradually as the horse advances through his training.

These problems are all down to the bit

Resistance to the bit shows your horse would rather you pulled the bit onto his lips or bars, or even interfere with his breathing rather than restrict his tongue and swallowing.

Use of a restrictive noseband – for example, a flash or grackle – does not solve the problem. It will only hold his mouth closed around an uncomfortable bit, preventing swallowing and causing more tension.

Other biting problems

- The bit being the wrong shape or action for his mouth shape, level of training and temperament.
- The bit having a painful action – 'nutcracking' on his bars and lips, or pinching the tongue.
- Bits that are poorly designed, with an action that masks or confuses the rider's intended hand signal.

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Grass roots

If your budget won't stretch to a custom-built school, why not turn a paddock into your own grass arena? Charlotte Anderson finds out how



Not all equestrian properties come with purpose-built arenas and obtaining planning permission to construct one can be tricky to say the least. If you've got the space and you're willing to maintain your own paddock, you can make a serviceable riding area.

There are things to consider when deciding where to position your grass arena to ensure you and your horse are safe. As obvious as it sounds, it's best to pick the flattest area you have, as expecting your horse to remain balanced on an undulating surface is a tall order.

Making sure your horse remains enclosed could save him from serious

injury should you fall off, so ensure you choose your location wisely. Don't make your arena too close to your field perimeter, as it's likely to create a track which will be made worse by horses who are turned out.

It's important to check the surface thoroughly for hazards such as rabbit holes, mole hills, tree roots, boggy or stony areas and rutted ground, as these may cause your horse to trip. Keep grass short – this helps you spot hazards and reduces the risk of tripping. Of course, your grass arena will evolve and change, particularly with the weather, so regular checks should be made to ensure it's up to scratch.

Never ride with loose horses in the

field. Spend time getting your horse used to the arena before tying something which might be out of his comfort zone.

Grass can be extremely slippery when wet so use studs or avoid riding on wet ground. This will also help prevent your ground becoming poached and rough when it dries out. Very hard ground can also be a problem as there will be minimal flex in the surface and your horse is at risk of concussion injuries, particularly when jumping or doing fast work. Regularly move jumps to prevent the ground from becoming damaged around the take off and landing points, and store your wooden poles off the ground as water damage will rot them, even in mild weather. ■



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Entries must be received by **30 September 2015**, unless otherwise stated. For full terms and conditions, visit horseandrideruk.com/terms_conds.htm
To enter online, please visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

Page 16 WIN! Make your horse a Lillidale model

Top/ jacket size.....

Question What are the two types of hoof grease in Lillidale Animal Health's new range?

Tie-breaker In 50 words or fewer, tell us why your horse would be a good model for the Lillidale advert:

Please also provide one photo of your horse. Entries close 28 August. With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Lillidale Animal Health, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ☐

Page 114 WIN! Airowear AyrVest & Charles Owen Ayr8 helmet

Question The side panels of the Charles Owen Ayr8 can be covered in leather-look and what other fabric?.....

Tie-breaker In 50 words or fewer, tell us how you would benefit from the addition of an AyrVest and Ayr8 helmet to your equestrian wardrobe:

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Page 122 WIN! A Horse of the Year Show VIP package

Question Which vehicle replica has Britains Farm Toys recently launched?

Tie-breaker In 50 words or fewer, tell us why you should win exclusive backstage tickets to the Horse of the Year Show:

Entries close 11 September. With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Britains Farm Toys, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ☐

Page 146 Perfect prizes!

(Tick which you'd like to win)

☐ CDSEPT/15 Childéric Silhouette dressage girth

Colour (black, Irish or master)

Size (Short 45-85cm or long 110-180cm)

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☐ ETSEPT/15 Equetech Fleur breeches

Colour (white or black denim)

Size (24-34in)

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☐ ABSEPT/15 Absorbine prize bundle

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☐ RBSEPT/15 Rambo Micklem multibridle and a Rambo Micklem diamanté competition bridle

Multibridle colour (black or brown)

Size (large horse, standard horse, small horse or pony)

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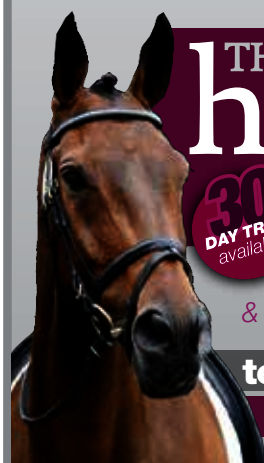


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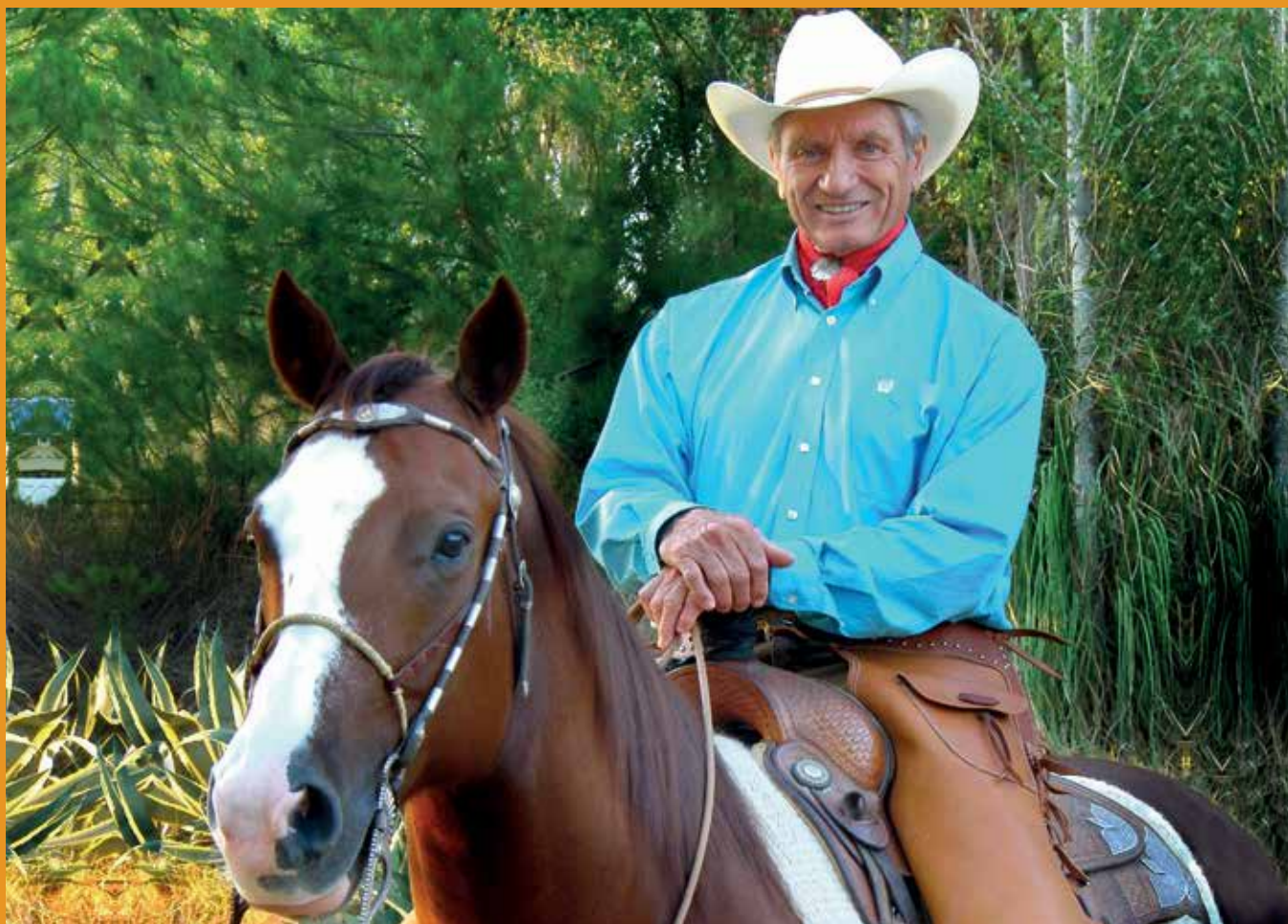
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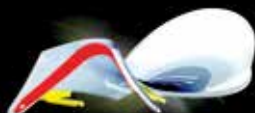
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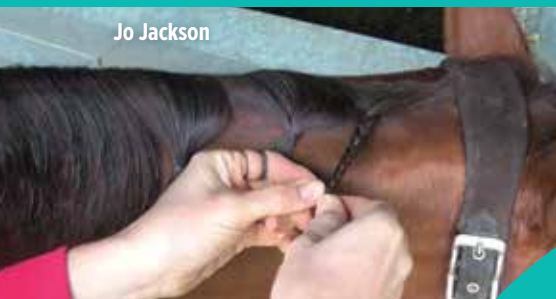
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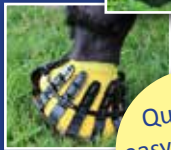
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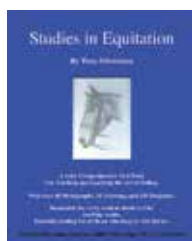


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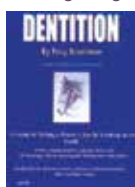


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Silverman has been teaching people to ride for over 40 years. He is also a popular High Court Equine Forensic Expert Witness, Lecturer and a past chairman of the ABRs teachers association. He originally published a booklet *The Instructor's Pocket Guide to Safe and Interesting Hacking* in 1995. In 2002 he followed this up with his first book about riding horses *Studies in Equitation*. Due to its popularity a revised and updated version was reprinted in 2007. In 2006 he was asked to present a paper *Business Problems Facing Yards and Studs* to a meeting of the National Equine Forum at the Royal Society. Tony has always been passionate about horses being treated in a kindly manner and it is his view that if this is to be achieved the rider must be taught to clearly understand the aids, learn how to apply them accurately: with correct timing and hence to ride with precision. You may contact Tony directly by email at s.silverman@sky.com.

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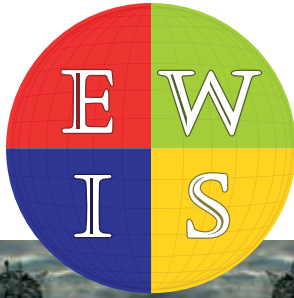


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My life with horses



Jade Hooke

Life on the international showjumping circuit is hectic and fun, but hard work, too, as Jade explains

Jade Hooke, international showjumper

Jade Hooke is a showjumper who grew up in South Africa before relocating to the UK to compete internationally. Having represented her country at the World Equestrian Games, she is now aiming for Rio 2016 – but being far from home has its challenges.



Monday

I've been in Spain on the Sunshine Tour for three weeks now. The competition has been pretty tough, but everything else has been a dream! I have four horses with me – two of my own and two belonging to clients. Today's an easy day after a busy weekend's jumping for the horses and I have a relaxed afternoon in the sun. Life at its best!



Tuesday

The best part about being on tour is that I don't have to cook, make my bed, wash the dishes or my clothes! But I'll be back in the UK next week and my mind turns to Hickstead with the Breen team. When I first saw Shane (my coach) competing, I thought to myself 'That's exactly how I want to ride'. He is an idol to me. But he's very strict and to the point as a trainer. I've had to work hard to get used to that, but it's helped my riding so much.



Thursday

Being away from home is tough and I'm feeling a bit homesick today. My boyfriend is a professional cricketer, so we spend a lot of time in different countries pursuing our careers. Thank goodness for Facetime! I have a good catch up with him and also Dad, who is still in South Africa. He competes in triathlon so we trade latest results. He is always there for a chat through good times and bad.



Friday

Although it feels like summer holidays and I would have loved to take a walk on the beach, I had a lesson with Shane this



today. He's a 19-year-old Namibian warmblood. I remember the first time I saw him competing when I was on a family holiday and I begged my mum to buy him for me. Mum is the reason I am where I am, doing what I love with this special horse. She was killed in a riding accident four years ago, and I miss her every day – but days like today, when the horse she bought me goes so well, help cheer me up. Era tries so hard that it's impossible to be anything other than delighted with his performance.



Wednesday

Walking into breakfast, I bump into showjumpers Reed Kessler and Bertram Allan, which is rather surreal. I hugely admire both of them and to be on the same tour is amazing. I come from a small town in South Africa called Port Elizabeth and have spent most of my life watching these idols from the television screen. Now it's me, on my own, battling it out in Europe!



Saturday

I have a great ride on A New Era, my top horse,



Sunday

All the horses jump well today. Unfortunately, there are no major wins, but with the younger horses it's all about us getting to know each other before we start climbing that ladder, and with the older horses I'm always pleased when they still feel keen and excited to jump. ■

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